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upon the summit of the mountain Tabakona. They are divided into groups according to their degree of power: the younger ones usually travel upon mice, frogs, cats, etc., the older ones on foxes, wolves, etc. On Assumption Eve they are all obliged to gather upon the Tabakona for the annual report of their deeds to their sovereign, Roskipi, and to produce material proof of their industrious service -- a heart taken from a man or animal, a liver, eyes, nails, hair, etc. To avoid attack from witches, the Abkhaz take the following measures: during the fast of the Assumption they erect crosses and stick candles in their hair, and on the eve of the Assumption they shoot off rifles, sing, and spend the whole night in vigil. The Abkhaz believes that a witch can simultaneously be at home, among people, and on top of the mountain Tabakona. The Abkhaz explain such a splitting-up of a person by saying that it is not the witch herself that wanders about, but her accessory soul (aphschchda = superfluous soul).

2.

The True God -- Paganism -- The Principal and Secondary Gods of the Abkhaz -- Causes of Polytheism -- "Creators" and "Forgers" -- Fate or Predestination.

To assist the supreme being, endowed with all the qualities with which, according to our understanding, God is endowed, says Mr. A., Abkhaz mythology added a number of other deities, assigning to each his particular designation. These assisting deities, according to their understanding, were created by the Almighty before man and the universe came into being, and people at prayer appeal through them to God himself. God himself never descends to earth, but if he needs to punish someone or to grant someone his grace, he sends out one of his assistants. In the prayers which are said and sung at sacrifices and other

/35 cont./
176 religious ceremonies, the Abkhaz addresses God thus: Akhdau
[182] (or antsa-daukva) /36/ zlypkha-khkhaura, which means "Great God, merciful one, gracious one."

Besides this merciful god, the Abkhaz, as we have said, have other secondary gods, whose creation was necessitated by the people's needs. Every atmospheric phenomenon, every danger threatening a man or his property, every type of toil assuring the existence of man created in the childish imaginations of these people separate, invisible protectors, ruling over all. These deities have no images, since they appear in different forms according to the circumstances; nevertheless, according to the understanding of the Abkhaz, not to be doubted, for it is felt in all the good and evil that can happen in the life of a person. Every step of a man is under their control and every departure from the true way immediately evokes punishment by them.

174 As science has proved by a multitude of analogous examples
176 from other primitive peoples, there can be no doubt that nature and its phenomena have played an enormous role in the development of the religious ideas and theistic images of the Abkhaz people. Their childlike mentality and imagination were undoubtedly strongly influenced by the azure sky, resting like an immense vault upon the earth, now threateningly and severely looking down from behind the clouds, now smiling with its fiery eyes, the sun by day and the moon and the stars by night. Mother Earth herself also exerted her influence upon them, for she is indeed mother, nurse, provider, and source of blessings and abundance; nor did the sun, the "eye of heaven," giving warmth and life to the whole world, remain without influence on their childlike imaginations, nor the moon, the "guard of night," which quietly floats on the vault of the sky and conquers the darkness of night; the threatening thunder bolt, instilling terror and destroying everything in its way; the air, now quiet and friendly and still, now threateningly perturbed and howling; the colorful, beautiful rainbow, this "belt" of the sky; the dawn, that "gate of Day"... All this and much else, of course, greatly

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776 [174] affected man in his infant stage; no wonder the Abkhaz personifies and deifies all these, together with trees, woods, fields, etc.; he deifies some things because they bring him help, others because they do him harm. Accordingly, Abkhaz mythology created special protective deities for every activity /37/ of man, whether agriculture, industry, art, or herding. Some of these are, for instance: Aithar, the protector of cattle; Dzhadzha, god of sowing; Shasha, god of the smithy, and others. Many of these deities are female; for instance, the protector of the element of water, "mother of the water," is a woman; the earth itself is personified as a woman; there is also a "lady-wind"; the ancestor of cattle is female, as is the ancestor of nanny-goats; the god of sowing, Dzhadzha, and others are also female.

777 776 [174] Besides these deities, there are the Ashatsa-chaphatsa, the "creator" and "forger" gods. There are either two of them, or many. Under the influence of Christianity, they are presented in the form of angels. "Every soul" is born through Ashatsa-chaphatsa. They determine the future of the newborn child, his happiness and unhappiness, the length of his life and the hour of his death, and they make an inscription on his forehead (lakhints'ara /see foreign text/) concerning all this. The Abkhaz is certain that these inscriptions on the forehead exist and believes that anyone can confirm it with his own eyes. Incidentally, let us tell an Abkhaz tale that illustrates the inevitability of predestination or fate.

777 776 539 In the night two men set out to steal. On the way they were caught in a heavy rainstorm. They took refuge under the porch of a peasant's hut. Peeping in, they saw a group of women gathered, among them a woman in labor, who shortly afterwards gave birth to a girl. The "creators" and "forgers" did not hesitate to appear. One of them said, "The newborn girl shall become the wife of one of the thieves outside that are looking in. This shall be his fate." The second of the "creators" and "forgers" confirmed the words of the first. The thief, already middle-aged, said on hearing this, "I am not young even now, and she has just

/37 cont./

777 been born; God save me from such a marriage." And so he
776 planned to kill the newborn baby; when everyone in the
539 house had fallen asleep, he slipped quietly in, carried the child out, ripped open her belly, and threw it upon the flat roof of the hut. Then the two thieves went on their way. The child's wailing awakened the women, who found her, sewed up the wound with silk thread, and thus saved her from death. And no matter how hard the thief about whom the above-mentioned prophecy was made tried to find a wife, he was /38/ unsuccessful. Meanwhile the girl who he thought was dead reached marriageable age and one day somehow met the thief. He immediately fell in love with her and married her. Then it was shown how inevitably every predestination and decision made by the "creator-forgers" is fulfilled.

VII.

Prayers in Honor of the Deities

782 Prayer is the name given to those religious ceremonies and rites accompanied by sacrifices in honor of the gods which are performed according to a definite pattern set and sanctified from olden times.

[776] Each deity may independently show, within his sphere of activity, grace or wrath toward man; for instance, he may send sickness or misfortune on him or his cattle, etc.
[787] The Abkhaz easily determine by special signs whether the
[688] deities' anger is the result of deviations from the fixed pattern of the religious rites. To avert the wrath of the gods caused by omissions in prayers and sacrifices, they must repeat the offerings and complete whatever was omitted the first time; uncorrected omissions and mistakes in ritual weigh heavily as guilt felt toward the angry gods, even upon generations
[755] far removed from the sinners. If anyone falls ill in conse-
[753] quence of neglect in ritual toward one or another god, he must offer him a sacrifice in order to recover. If he is

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782 prescribes a prayer to the water, which is thought to be the
755 cause of the illness. Since the protectress of the waters,
[791] the "Mother of Water," is a woman, a sinless old woman is invited to the ceremony.

• 776 A large, clear, inaccessible fresh-water lake is thought
[778] to be the residence of the "Mother of Water"; she may also dwell in a pure spring, untouched by anything unclean, such as a pig, etc. The "Mother of Water" sometimes comes out of her dwelling to the shore, and at that time anyone may see her. This is how the Abkhaz describe this "Mother of Water." She is a most beautiful, bewitching woman; her locks are incomparable and chestnut in color; her eyes are laughing. The Abkhaz who has been bewitched by her talks
753 to his comrades thus: "Eh, brothers, I have been vanquished
776 by the 'Mother of the Water,' and from now on I no longer
539 belong to your society. Recently I rode into a dense forest and saw a table spread there under a big oak; a mirror and a lighted candle stood nearby; the 'Mother of the Water' was sitting in front of the mirror, smiling at her own beauty and combing her long hair, which reached the ground. My arms fell to my sides from exhaustion; I could not take my eyes from that wonderful vision. When she saw me, she quickly arranged her hair and came towards me. I felt giddy... Without a word she raised all ten fingers, asking me, 'Are you willing to be my husband for ten years or not?' I shook my head, but she would not stop, and with the proper number of fingers raised, she offered me in turn nine, eight, seven years, and so on /41/ of marriage. As I kept on refusing, she finally raised her last little finger and fixed her gaze upon me. I immediately gave my consent..." (1).

1. "Etnograf. pis'ma iz Abkhazii /Ethnographical letters from Abkhazia/," Konst. Machavariani, Droeba, 1884-1885.

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782 The "pure" old woman who was invited to the ceremony,

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755 782 [789] candles, she lets it float down the stream, saying, "Amuse yourself with this one, instead of the sick person." Finally the old praying-woman passes her hand over the sick person's back, raises him, and having given him liberty ("azati") from his ailment, she sends him home, instructing him not to look around on his way back. The food brought to the stream is eaten on the spot by the participants in the ceremony; the remains from the table are thrown into the water and the dishes washed clean.

This prayer-ritual is considered the most sacred of all in Abkhazia, and the name of the rainbow, Atsaqva, is pronounced with great reverence. The Abkhaz claims that as [821] a consequence of this ceremony in the rainbow's honor the rain appears.

/43/ 4.

782 The Prayer-Ceremony in Honor of the Wind (Phsharnha)

A large loaf of bread with cheese is prepared, placed in a basket, and carried some distance from the house. Here [776] a prayer is said to "Lady Wind" (a deity of female sex), in [824] which she is asked to bring good and to carry off evil and to [777] deliver them from all sorts of misfortunes, etc. Then the middle part of the loaf is cut out, carried into the forest, and hung on an oak tree near the top. The next day, the one who first comes near the oak tree feasts on this offering.

5.

A Prayer in Honor of a Tree

782 824 On Assumption Day, vitushki are baked according to the number of men in the family; then the master of the house, with his household, approaches any kind of young tree and, putting his foot on it, prays, "Tree, give me your blessing and happiness ... that I may safely come down

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7.

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The Prayer Ceremony in Honor of Azhahara

The Abkhaz call the protector or genius of the house and hearth by the name Azhahara in whose honor is performed the ceremony for a young married couple in the stage of their marriage before they have appeared together before their elders and the young woman is for the first time led into her husband's main house, or when the bride is invited into her father's house. One of the oldest members of the family sticks pieces of the heart and liver of a sacrificial animal on a spit and begs Azhahara to protect the young couple at home and out of doors.

8.

Alishkantra

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Alishkantra is the "mistress" of dogs. In the opinion of the Abkhaz, the owner of good dogs will also be fortunate in the multiplication of his cattle; good fortune in dogs is associated with good fortune in all domestic animals. Therefore before praying to other god-protectors of domestic and wild animals, the Abkhaz prays to Alishkantra to grant him luck with good dogs and the opportunity to raise and breed them.

9.

/45/ A Prayer in Honor of Zhabran

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Zhabran is the protector of animals. Every Abkhaz owning cattle performs the prayer-ceremony in his honor on "Cheese Saturday." For this they prepare suluguni (a big cheese) called "sacred cheese"; bread dough is placed on the hearth, in which a man puts a core of suluguni, whereupon he prays, "Prefer me to all those pronouncing your name;

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[782] make my cattle multiply; make them increase to such an
231 extent that in the future I may pray to you and offer you a cheese as big as this loaf of bread and my courtyard will have no room for all my cattle. Preserve my cattle from all trouble and misfortunes both at home and outside; grant that my cattle will lose only old hair and dung; grant that my herd will be so large that an animal walking in the rear will be unable to overtake one running in the front; may the calves play like young bears and shine like young stallions. This I ask of you." Then the person praying puts three walnut branches in the bread dough and, striking against the ceiling, exclaims, "Voots! chiphsh!" (a call to summon cattle). The same ceremony is performed on the Thursday of "Cheese-
[796] week" in honor of the protector of goats; it is called Dzhabran.

10.

A Prayer in Honor of Aithar

• [796] Aithar is the protector of domestic cattle and the
[796] farm economy. The prayers to him are held on a Saturday, except during Lent, because offerings to him must consist of milk products, and among the rich the offering is a milk-fed calf. The customary dish at this time is a thin gruel made with the milk of a cow that has recently calved. The shepherds stand around a kettle or pot filled with gruel; the oldest of them, holding a wax candle, pronounces a prayer: "Aithar, grant me superiority above all those who pronounce your name." He then begs Aithar to increase his herds and to protect them from beasts of prey. Upon concluding /46/ the prayer, the shepherd throws three spoonfuls of gruel into a brazier with coals standing nearby, and the participants eat the rest. If the inhabitants of the whole village or a part of it perform the ceremony in honor of Aithar, then a calf is sacrificed, which is slaughtered by the most respected old man, who first pronounces a prayer. After the meat of the calf has been cooked or roasted, the same old man

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pronounces a prayer the second time, cutting off pieces from different parts of the animal and offering them to Aithar by throwing them on the red-hot coals.

11.

Azhvephshaa (Abn-intsvakhu)

Azhvephshaa is the god of the forests and wild animals. Hunters sacrifice to him before setting out on a hunt, usually the middle or at the end of December. For the sacrifice, they jointly buy a ram or a goat. When it is roasted, the oldest huntsman prays to Azhvephshaa to send success for their undertaking; at the conclusion of the prayers, he throws small pieces of roasted meat and a piece of incense on the coals. Each of the remaining hunters repeats the prayer in turn, adding his own wishes and indicating the particular animal he would like to kill, while throwing pieces of incense on the coals.

12.

Dzhadzha and Anaphanga

Dzhadzha is the patroness of the crops. Prayers to her are offered twice a year: in March, at the beginning of spring, and in November, after the maize has been stored. Praying to Dzhadzha is not accompanied by any special solemnity; it is performed quietly by each individual family. Rich landowners sometimes invite their former dependents to the prayer, particularly those who have taken part in the sowing and reaping of their crops. On the day set aside for prayer, dishes made exclusively of grain and fruits grown by the master of the house are prepared. After the food has been placed on the table, the oldest member of the family /47/ addresses a prayer to Dzhadzha, thanking him for the good harvest or begging him to send everything in abundance. For the spring prayer to Dzhadzha, all the dishes prepared are lenten.

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782 241 [776] The Abkhaz asks of Anaphanga, the goddess of crops: "Wherever I draw my furrow and strike with iron and with implement, may an abundance of grain be granted me; grant happiness to the sower and to the consumer." During reaping, when the sheaves are first brought home, the Abkhaz prays in honor of Anaphanga; during the fast of Assumption, however, a cross is made of the ears; kernels of maize and beans are fastened to a candle to avert possible harm by evil spirits, e.g., by Dzhadzha herself. This [776] Dzhadzha is an ugly goddess, short and fat; when she comes into a field she exclaims, "Natsvis, natsvis" (little finger! little finger!), i.e., the wish that the maize in that field grow no higher than a little finger, but if one pursues Dzhadzha with the words, "Raki dzaki, raki dzaki" ("cubit-span, cubit-span"), she leaves the field and her wish does not come true.

[243] Before the threshing of the gomi /millet/ the Abkhaz pray to the great goddesses to keep the whole family in good health and to permit the whole household in future, and at the head the lady of the house herself, to gather at the beater for the threshing of the gomi (satsekhveli).

13.

A Prayer for the Bees

782 231 The Abkhaz bake a round loaf of bread with cheese, take it to the bee-garden, and pray to Ananagunda for the preservation of their bees; upon returning home, they break the loaf and eat it without looking at one another, for which some stand facing one door, some another.

14.

Prayer to the Sun and the Moon

782 821 The Abkhaz addresses the sun with the following prayer: "Sunlight, withhold not your benevolence from us, warmth

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753 "hung on the girls' ears." Rheumatic pains in the knees, instability of character, general weakness of the organism of a person, etc. -- all these are consequences of a
789 "weighty cause." To avert the sickness, a button is fastened to the ear like an earring. An innocent and sinless woman
755 leads the ailing person to a nut-bush and makes him kneel;
782 she drives seven /49/ sticks of nut-wood into the ground around him, fastens a lighted candle to each of them, and prays
[776] on behalf of the sick person to hanipha, the genius, walking along the rocks.

18.

Prayer in Honor of the Supreme Being

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753 This supreme being is believed to be the cause of all kinds of sickness in man. When the body-temperature of a seriously sick person fluctuates greatly and he is alternately thrown into a fever and chills, when he faints or loses consciousness and regains it momentarily, and then begins to toss and become delirious, to sing songs, to mumble prayers, etc., the Abkhaz believe that all these severe pathological conditions are unmistakable signs of action by a superior force, by the supreme deities (Antsa r mzz) on the sick person -- "there is a divine cause." The Abkhaz are convinced that this "divine cause" has taken up its abode in the sick person and therefore they say, Antsa drthoup, i.e., "a god
755 came to visit." When the female fortune-teller confirms
[787] that the cause of the sickness is indeed that "a god took up his abode" in the sick person, then everyone in the house must assume a gay appearance and rejoice instead of grieving, for "where the god has taken up his abode, there can be nothing but rejoicing." Therefore the village youth gathers in the house of such a patient and all begin to sing and dance, and even the sick person is made to take part in the dances and singing, if he is strong enough to do so.

[782] The prayer-sacrifice is carried out near the house on the edge of a forest. The offering is a goat or a kid, a

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755 782 ram or a lamb, together with loaves of bread, etc. All this is taken to the place selected, and the patient himself [562] is led there. No women are present, for they are not allowed to approach this sacred place. A venerable man, holding a candle, declares, "Great god, as is proper and as the fortune-teller has prescribed, the worshiper today stands before you; he has brought sacrificial animals and loaves of bread ... . Have mercy upon him, be merciful to him, if he has sinned before you, forgive him. I beg you to let him go from this day forward, to leave him and free him like a loosened knot." While saying these words, the venerable man moves the candle around the patient, lights it, and places it nearby. He then /50/ takes another candle [776] and prays to Michael-Gabriel. Upon the completion of this ceremony, the sick person returns home alone, while the others sit down to a meal.

One such ceremony, however, is not considered sufficient for the send-off of so eminent a guest as a god. The [796] Abkhaz is therefore obliged to repeat the ceremony annually. One day a week is set aside as a holiday in honor of that same supreme being; this day is considered such a sacred one that the house even remains unswept, etc.

19.

Aphi

776 [821] Aphi (2) is the god and master of the thunder, lightning,

[113] 2. See Sborn. sveden. o kavk. gortsakh, No. V, Tiflis, 1871, pp. 15-16, article "Religioznyye verovaniye abkhaztsev /Religious beliefs of the Abkhaz/," by A. -- where, by the way, this deity is called Afy.

[782] and all atmospheric phenomena in general. The most solemn prayers in Abkhazia are offered in honor of this god.

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2. Ibid., p. 162.

175 of Syracuse (who lived about the middle of the fourth
764 century B.C.) said /53/ that "it is not accepted among the Colchians either to bury or to burn the corpses of men. They put these corpses in fresh animal-hides and hang them on trees. They commit to the earth the corpses of women, however, ... They venerate heaven and earth above all" (1).

1. Ibid., p. 208.

20.

Shasha

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Under the name of Shasha the Abkhaz understand the inventor of the craft of the smith. They say of him, "Shasha khe ah-dou," which means, "Shasha, the great lord of trades." Shasha or Shash was the first blacksmith. He picked up the red-hot iron, not with tongs, but with his hands, and he forged it, not on an anvil, but on his knees. He is the inventor not only of the craft of the smith, but the inventor-patron of 363 other crafts as well. The smithy with all its appurtenances is the image of Shasha (2).

2. Iveriia, 1888, No. 186.

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Prayers are offered up to him on New Year's Eve, and the most complete of the ceremonies to him is held by the blacksmiths and the locksmiths.

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On New Year's Eve the master of the house kills either a calf or a ram, and his wife kills a rooster for each member of the family and prepares a pie of wheat-flour and fresh cheese. The livers and hearts of all the slaughtered animals are roasted separately; for this, instead of a spit, a stick from a young nut-tree is used. When the food is ready

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782 and has been brought into the smithy, the blacksmith puts
326 all his instruments on the anvil; a brazier with coals is placed nearby and the whole family kneels down around the anvil. After taking off his bashlyk and his belt (as proof that he addresses Shasha with an open heart and mind), the smith lights a wax candle, throws incense on the coals of the brazier, and prays to Shasha to bless him and his family with good health and long life, and to make the instruments forged from iron do him good rather than harm. After all those present have pronounced "Amen" at the end of the prayer, the master of the house cuts pieces of the pie and of the organs roasted on the nut-wood spit and throws them on the brazier with the words: "Until that time when I am unable /54/ to feed with these little pieces all Shervashidzi and Anchabadzi, let no one in my family fall ill. I pray to you for this, Shasha, bringing to you a real sacrifice." The smith then cuts off just such little pieces from the other sacrifices and distributes them to all the members of the family, who eat them and wash them down with three swallows
[273] of wine. The host designates the wine for this repast immediately after the harvesting of the grapes and saves it in a separate jug called shĕsher gaphshi, buried in the smithy itself; under the fear of punishment by Shasha, no one dares to touch it, even in any extremity, before New Year's Eve, neither the host himself nor, all the more, one of the bystanders. Upon the completion of the praying, the prepared dishes are transferred to the house of the smith, where the neighbors gather and feast to the glory of Shasha until dawn.

782 Several princes also offer a prayer to Shasha on New
• 776 Year's Eve, in which case each of the persons present, having
565 been at one time dependent on these princes, brings a rooster. Shasha is one of those divinities called upon by the Abkhaz more often than others.

776 According to the understanding of the Abkhaz, the divinity whose name is called falsely immediately punishes the guilty one by those means or tools which are in the field of his specialty. Thus, for instance, one who has called

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776 falsely the name of Aphi, who commands the thunderstorms, cannot be punished by means of firearms or side arms, which make up the specialty of Shasha, etc.

782 326 Oaths to Shasha are of two kinds: in the smithy and under the open sky. In the first instance, the smith, having placed the hammer on the anvil and crossed his hands on his breast, stands to one side of it, the one swearing the oath on the other side of the anvil, opposite the smith, and the one concerning whose affairs the oath is being sworn stands to the side. The one swearing the oath, having taken the hammer into his hands, says: "If I am guilty of that of which they accuse me, then may Shasha smash open my head on the anvil"; upon these words, he hits the anvil three times with the hammer, and the oath is considered sworn. In the second 782 instance, two sticks are driven into the ground, one opposite the other; on them are hung loaded rifles whose muzzles are trained on the space occupied by the one swearing the oath; those present stand to the side. The one swearing the oath pronounces, "If I said a lie, may Shasha shoot bullets through my head /55/ from these rifles," and he walks through the space between the rifles three times.

755 782 326 [787] At the first sign of sickness accompanied by headaches, the person who has taken a false oath asks his relatives to find out from a female fortune-teller the cause of his ailment. The fortune-teller, who has usually heard beforehand, from the blacksmith himself about everyone who has taken an oath, throws some beans and looks at the stars, and then indicates the cause of the sickness: a false oath sworn to Shasha on such and such a day, in connection with such and such a matter, and in such and such a smithy. One of the ailing person's relatives goes to the person concerning whose affairs the false oath was sworn and by gifts induces him to pray to Shasha to forgive the patient, promising, of course, that upon recovery the patient will give him complete satisfaction. Then they both go to the smithy where the oath was taken, and the

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755 sick man's accuser, taking off his belt to bear witness to the
782 sincerity of his address to Shasha, approaches the anvil and
326 utters a prayer in which he requests Shasha to deliver the guilty one from his ailment, with a pledge that after his recovery the sick man will come himself to beg for forgiveness from Shasha; then, leaving a piece of iron in the smithy, he goes to set the patient's mind at reast. If the sick man recovers, he satisfies the injured one and goes with him to the smithy, and, having put a small silver coin (no less than two rubles) on the anvil, thanks Shasha for his recovery; the ram, the bread, and the wine that he has brought with him are given to the blacksmith, from whom, after the prayer, he receives pieces of the ram's liver and heart; he sends these to his family as a token of Shasha's forgiveness. In company with his relatives, the injured party, and the blacksmith, he himself eats the food that was brought along in the blacksmith's house.

21.

The Prayer to Eyrig-aatsnykh

579 Eyrig-aatsnykh is the patron of stealing, plundering, and
782 robbery. Beyond the river Bzyb this deity is called
[776] Chugurukhnykh; all the Abkhaz setting out to steal among the Ubykh, Shapsug, and other mountain-dwellers used to
[778] bring offerings to Chugurukhnykh, whose altar, if this expression may be used here, /56/ was located on a cliff beyond the fortification of Gagra. Prayers to this god are offered only by those who practice the "arts" of which he is the patron. An offering of four cone-shaped loaves of bread is brought; a prayer is said over them, asking a blessing upon the enterprise and giving a promise to sacrifice something else to the god in case of success. The loaves of bread are taken along on the trip. The thank-offering consists of something of the stolen goods, and if a horse or a head of cattle is taken, the sacrifice consists of a lock of the stolen animal's hair;

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579 782 all this is hung on trees near the place where Eyrig-aatsnykh is believed to have his permanent abode.

22.

Anybs-nykha-dudryuphsh

• 776 Anybs-nykha-dudryuphsh is worshiped as the mightiest of the gods. Mt. Dudryuphsh is regarded as his abode. Those [778] who dare to climb this mountain are immediately punished with blindness; therefore prayers and sacrifices to this deity are offered at the foot of the mountain. As a deity, Anybs-nykha has no exclusive, professional field of authority, but he is worshiped as higher and mightier than all the other gods. [782] The arrangement of prayers and sacrifices to him is the same as to Sha-sha, with the difference that when an oath is taken in his name, the formula is "May Anybs-nykha send me blindness and every ailment . . ., "etc.

778 [823] Anybs-nykha's residence is under the exclusive supervision of the large Abkhaz family Ankhaë-Chichba. The Chichba have enjoyed this right for several generations; it is a source of great profit to them, since permission to bring sacrifices to this deity must be bought from them with presents. Not far from the top of Mt. Dudryuphsh, the actual abode of Anybs-nykha, a stone lies under an oak; on this stone the image of the Holy Virgin has been carved. All those who [782] take an oath must put a coin or something metal under this stone, and woe to him who is tempted to take anything away, even one little thing, from among the objects lying there!

23.

/57/ Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve

782 [796] [262] On Christmas Eve in every family chickens are killed and four kvakvari (small loaves of bread stuffed with cheese)

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731 donkey is brought, which they cover with a white sheet and
789 put the doll on it. One of the girls takes the donkey by the rein, while two others support the doll, and they set out for the place where the raft was made. The other girls accompany the procession on both sides, singing "dziva dziva
[539] dzvari! Kva kva mykryld aphsh-akh ipha did shivait dzy khychik, dzy khuchik," which means, "To get water, water! To get rainwater; a red daisy! Son of the Lord, we thirst for a little water, a little water!" When they come to the river, they take the doll from the donkey, put it on the raft, and, setting the straw afire, let it float downstream; they then try to chase the donkey into the water, which, of course, requires no small effort. At last the donkey is dragged into the river, and, emerging on the opposite bank, he begins
[825] to bray, which is considered the surest sign of forthcoming rain. If, however, the donkey fails to bray, the same ceremony is repeated anew on the following day or the next day after that.

25.

Saints

● 776 Independent of the general worship of all the deities dis-
778 cussed above, the inhabitants of the villages of Lykhny,
[184] Lzaa, and Ilori are under the protection of saints, to whom the churches erected in those villages are dedicated; or, more correctly, who are under the protection of the churches themselves. In Lykhny each family invokes the protection of Anan-Lykhnykh (the Virgin Mother of Lykhny), in Lzaa, of Anan-Lzaanykh (the Virgin Mother of Lzaa, i.e., the cathedral of Pitsunda dedicated to the Holy Virgin), in Ilori, of Tsminda Giorgi (the cathedral of St. George). To invoke
782 their protection, sacrifices must be offered, which are, in
[796] fact, brought by each family once a year on a Sunday evening.
[231] - On the day set aside for the offering, the best year-old

[766 cont.] Then one tries to console the dead (angip'sngis) with prayer and sacrifices of meat and sour milk, which are laid on a cloth under a protective roof near some clothing and, in the case of female souls, trinkets, and begs for the recovery of the stricken person, who stands nearby and whose back is stroked for "deliverance" (azati).

When someone has drowned and his body has been buried, his soul is supposed to have remained in the water and must be fetched out. For this purpose they hang a leather shoulder-sack on a silk string over the stream in question, and men and women stand on the back singing and playing the harp to entice the soul into the sack. As soon as the soul has slipped in, a man jumps into the water and ties the sack shut, he then takes it to the grave and allows the soul to enter into its body through a hole.

[767] Religious beliefs and customs. Christianity is supposed to have been brought to Abkhazia, according to the Georgian chronicle of Vakhtang V, about 40 A.D.; but apparently did not find favorable soil, since there are no reports of successful propagation until the time of the Byzantine occupation of the coastal cities. Emperor Justinian had a large church erected at Bitshvinta (pitzunda) where the Abkhaz Catholics and the Georgian governor then had their residence. At the end of the seventeenth century most of the Abkhaz were induced by the Tatars to take up Islam, and only the Samurakhan remained faithful to Christianity, but the many ruins of churches and monasteries are regarded by them as holy places to which they make pilgrimages and on which they take oaths. Also several customs may have a Christian origin: use of wax tapers and incense, colored Easter-eggs, respect for the sign of the cross, fasting, eating of pork, and the like. The Cherkess, in whose lands few remains of churches are to be found, gave up Christianity for Islam later than the Abkhaz; the Kabardin were converted to it toward the middle of the eighteenth century, and the others, under Turkish influence, toward the end of the eighteenth century. Both religions, however, have exerted as little influence as among the mountain Georgians, for the old indigenous beliefs and customs have never been given up.

The gods of the Abkhaz are very similar to those of the Osset (see pp. 86 f.). A supreme god (Antsar mz) is ruler over

[767 cont.]

776 good and bad. The Hammerers (Ašatsatšap'atsa) decide the fate of the newborn and write it on their foreheads (lakhintsara). As nature gods they worship the protector of cattle (Aĭt'ar), of goats (Džabran), of wild game (Ažvepša), of the earth (Adabna), of the rainbow (Atsakwa), and the protectress of the water (Dzlan dzahwas'), of the wind (P'šarn'a), of seeds (Dž'adž'a and Anap'anga), of dogs (Alĭškantra), of bees (Ananagund), and others. Just like the Osset, they have a protector of raiders (Eirig-ātsnykh) or Tšugurukhnykh) and one of smiths (Šyošu). The latter two, which are called upon very frequently, may be of a manistic type, derived from the belief in souls, as may be the protective spirit of the hearth (Ašara), the mother-goddess (Anana'a), and the "outer ones" (adnqa) (see p. 22). The Abkhaz attribute to the god of thunder (cf. p. 87) the same power and abilities as the Osset do to the holy Elias, but he is in part confused with the incomprehensible highest god (see p. 61) and is endowed with his abilities, and therefore also the shape of the local supreme god (Anybs-nykha-dudrüp'š), whose home is supposed to be the mountain Dudrüpsh at Lykhny. ---Hunters sacrifice a male goat or a ram to the god of game (Ažvepša) before the hunt, which begins after the vintage [768] and lasts until about the new year, so that he will grant them the desired prey from his herds. He gives them, however, only those animals that he and his daughter have already eaten and that he has restored to life by wrapping their bones in the skin after his meal. White animals are the herdsmen of Ažvepša and therefore must not be slain.

224 [782] [825]

776 Evil souls, similar to the western European vampires, tear the eyes, heart, liver, etc. out of the body and suck the milk from the cows. They have different powers and accordingly ride on frogs, mice, cats, or on foxes and wolves. Their chief (Roskipi) lives on the mountain Tabakona, where every year they must account for Mary's Assumption and must exhibit the plundered body-parts. For this reason the Abkhaz put up crosses during fasts, carry lights on their heads, and on the previous night stay up and shoot and sing. The evil souls can at the same time stay among men and on the mountain Tabakona, since

[788]

A 776 [768 cont.] only their secondary souls (ap'stsṭsada) wander about.

A [777] Beside their old gods, the Abkhaz worship Christ as the Holy Teacher, Mary, and St. George as the protector of the villages Lykhny (Anan-Lykhnykh), Lsā or Pitzunda (Ana-Lsānykh), [783] and Ylori (Tsminda-Giorgi), to whom a sheep is sacrificed every year, and a calf with notched ears is donated to the churches.

C 778 The Cherkess, like the mountain Georgians, had sacred groves and trees, where in former times the public gatherings were held, where raiders found refuge, and where the spoils of the hunt and war and sacrificial offerings were hung. Also individual springs and mountains, certain stone columns (cf. p. 63), and iron and stone crosses were supposed to have been considered sacred.

C 782 The sacerdotal duties are performed by selected older men; they lead the prayers and slaughter the sacrificial animals, sheep, lambs, goats, oxen, in the sacred groves before the cross, after having previously singed them on the neck with a pine-torch and poured millet-beer over them (cf. below in Section III, 1b: Cheremis [untranslated]). The head of the animal is hung up on a tree for the god, the priest receives the skin, and the meat is eaten by the believers, who entertain themselves on festival [796] days with feasts, dancing, drinking, races, tournaments, and the like.

C 771 [769] The gods of the Cherkess are almost the same as those of the Abkhaz; they have a supreme being (T'ka) who reigns over the heavens; a god of the smiths (Tliebske), the protectors of agriculture (Yemikha, Skus'kha, Naokhatkha); the guardian of the forests (Mezitkh, Mezetkha), who rides on a boar with golden bristles and whose daughters milk the does; the lord of the bees (Merissa or Mereïme); three sisters who watch over domestic life, warriors in battle, and the traveler on his way; the god of the winds and waters (Seozeres), and others.

C 796 At the beginning of spring, a three-day celebration is held in honor of the last god, during which a dry pear-tree hung with garlands and other decorations, with a cheese at the top,

[770 cont.]

231 (atlar-tšoup'), they lay the animal on a quickly erected, three-
[782] meter-high framework or in a tree. The owner sacrifices an ox
and prays to be spared in the future; then they eat the meat of
the sacrificial animal, bread, and cheese, drink wine, and feast
766 the entire day. The Abkhaz proceed in the same way for a per-
son struck by lightning, but no one may weep lest the god be-
come angry (see p. 87).

789 During drought one also turns to Ap'i to send rain; an
[782] ox is sacrificed, and at the feast songs of thanks and praise
(antšva-rysšva) are sung in alternating chant. In order to evoke
rain magic similar to that customarily practiced among the
Balkan peoples is used (cf. also p. 64). The girls from the vil-
lage stricken with drought place a female doll embodying the
drought on a donkey and lead it to the river; here they put the
doll on a raft made of twigs and straw, ignite it, and allow it to
drift. They pull the donkey by force through the water, and if
he brays, there will be rain.

755 Various gods are called upon in case of illness. Ague,
[753] delirium, and the like accompanying serious illness are attributed
to the presence of the supreme god (Antsar mz) in the body of the
sufferer. In order to cure him, they sing and dance about him
and even force him to do the same; then they sacrifice bread
[782] and a goat or sheep in the vicinity of the house, during which
no woman may be present; an old man with a candle circles
the sick person and pleads with the god to forgive him and de-
liver him. He also prays afterwards to Michael-Gabriel.

In case of fever they look for help from the "Mother of
the Waters"; she lives, according to them, in a clear lake or
• [776] spring, is beautiful, has brown hair and laughing eyes, and likes
to live for a while with a man, like the mermaids. An old woman
touches the water with some object belonging to the feverish
person and begs the goddess to release him if she has enthralled
him. Then she ladles up a few drops of water on some alder-
leaves and holds them over the fire in the house so that the fever
may leave as quickly as the water on the leaves. Finally the
old woman moves away quickly, with the wish that the fever, too,

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already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals.

I should further point out that all the material herein described was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lamberti) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation in Northern Abkhasia.

I begin my notes with Àyt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity *antswà*,* God.

Antswà is a compound word, consisting of *an*, "mother," and *tswa* (*ratswà*)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.[1] "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural *àntswa* and 'God'—*antswà*, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

* The underlined *tsw* is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "*ts*" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "*z*" (*Zeit*, time), and the labial semi-vowel "*w*", the labialization of the preceding "*ts*". "*Tsw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ts*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1928, p. 31. [Translator's Note.]

[1] It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god", in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in *-tswa*, with the aid of the Abkhasian word *ratswa* would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, §62. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anapa* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination *-tswa* in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianskii Vostok*.]

'mothers' and 'God', are often pronounced in the same manner." [1] 196
"During the study of the different religious beliefs and customs of [195]
the Abkhasians," he continues, "we came across the following phrase among others: *antswá r-mɔzɔzɔ*—'the cause, guilt of God' (properly, 'the guilt or fault of gods,' N. Janashia). The roman r is the pronominal characteristic of the third person plural. . . . The above quoted construction—*antswá r-mɔzɔzɔ*—could not have been arrived at unless the word *antswá* was used in the plural," justly remarks the author; "were it in the singular, we would have had *antswá i-mɔzɔzɔ*."

Abkhasians regard the elements and manifestations of nature as rational beings. Each of these rational beings has his own gods, whom the orthodox Abkhasian serves honestly, in the light of his understanding. If the name of one, or more, of these gods has been forgotten by the people, he, the god, is simply called *inkhwɔ**—"his 'part', 'share' of mother," or they use the full form *intswakhwɔ*—"his part of God," while under the influence of Christianity—*inɔkhakhwɔ*, in which *akhwɔ* denotes "part, share, dole" and *anɔkha*—"icon." [2]

In Abkhasian conception, God is One, but He is of infinitely numerous "doles" or parts. Not only each manifestation of nature, but also each tribe, family, or individual, has his own part of God, just as each Christian has his guardian-angel. The Abkhaz says *sɔntswakhwɔ*—"my (*s-* is the pronominal characteristic of the first [193]
person singular) part of God"; *untswakhwɔ*—"thy (*u-* is the pronominal characteristic of the second person singular) part of God." And it should be noted that one may offend against not only one's own "part of God", but also against "the part of God" of one's neighbour, or relation, etc. . . .

This conception of the Deity as a multiform being appears to account for the fact that the word *antswá* is in the plural. Here I will [191]
note that such a conception evidently did not prevail among the Abkhasians only; its traces remain to this day even among the

[1] P. Dcharaia, *On the Relation of the Abkhasian lang. to the Japhetic* (in Russian) in *Materials for Japhetic Linguistics*, St. Pb., 1912, vol. iv, p. 65. 104

* The combination "*khw*" represents a sound uttered with one breath impulse. The underlined "*kh*" ("*kh*") constitutes actually a trigraph in which the digraph "*kh*" represents a guttural fricative equivalent to German *ach-laut*, and the *linea subscript* a hard diffusive glottal spirant, which is not to be identified with the palatal (front) "*h*", and which is represented elsewhere, independently, as "*h*"; the combination "*kh*" (= *kh* + *h*) is thus a deeper guttural, glottal, sound than the German *ach-laut*. The labial semi-vowel "*w*" represents the labialization of the preceding "*kh*". "*Khw*" thus represents a labialised variety of "*kh*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet*, pp. 48 and 39; see also his *Abkhasian-Russian Dictionary*, Leningrad, 1926, pp. XXXV–XXXVI. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[2] I. Javakhishvili derives *anɔkha* from the Georgian word *khati*, icon. May not *khati* be derived from the Abkhasian verb *akhat'ara*? *A-khà*, head, *at'ara*, to give, to set, to level the head. Or is it a mere consonance?

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Georgians. Thus, according to Iv. Gv. Gomelauri, the well-known pedagogue, in K'iziqi (Signakh district, in Kakhet'i) they say: *tchemi dsili ghmert'i*; *sheni dsili ghmert'i*, "my part of God," "thy part of God." A. Dsuladze, who is well acquainted with the life of the Gurian people, told me that similar expressions were also used in Guria.

Further, as the reader will see for himself, the word *an*, "mother" constitutes part of the names of a series of gods, and several of these names are of the feminine gender, as Dcharaia has also justly noticed. In this connection I should like to direct the attention of the reader to the names of two gods, namely, *jabràn* and *zhwabràn*.* Each of these words has in our opinion several connotations; *jabràn* is compounded of several words: *j* is the root from the word *a-j-ma*, a goat; *a-b*, father; *r* the pronominal characteristic of the third person plural; and *an*, mother. Thus *jabràn* denotes "father and mother of goats", i.e. "(fore)parents of goats", or "god of goats". In the same manner *zhwabràn* is compounded of *a-zhw*, a cow, and of the components just explained, so that the whole denotes "father and mother of cows", i.e. "(fore)parents of cows".[1] It seems to me that at the dawning of their religio-philosophical life, the Abkhasians evidently worshipped equally both their male and female ancestors. How strong is this ancestor-worship among the Abkhasians even to-day will be shown in my work *The Ancestor Cult*.

Thus, as is the case of Dcharaia, I think that the word *antswà* is derived from the word *an* in the plural. I also think that the name *antswà*, of the Supreme Being, arose from the deification of ancestors. At first it was evidently used with the plural termination, and in the feminine gender, and later, in the course of time, from "many mothers-gods" arose the One God *antswà*.[2] The changing of the gender of gods is often observed in the religions of the primitive peoples, and *antswà* therefore constitutes no exception.[3]

Antswà is One, but He is plural as to His parts. All the gods, of which we will speak below, are subject to and obey Him as the Supreme Being. In the tales, I was told, it is said that *antswà's* mother came from a Megrelian princely *gvari* of Mkheidze, the Abkhasian form of

* The combination *zhw* is to be uttered with one breath impulse; it represents a labialised variety of "*zh*" (= French "*j*"). Cf. "*tsw*", p. 118, n. *. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] Such a morphological interpretation does not appear admissible, as the word *an*, if in this case it denotes "mother", is never combined with *ab*, father, but governs the first part of the compound word, *jab* and *zhab*, which, judging from the relative infix *r*, is assumed to be plural. [Note by the Editor, *Khr. V.*]

[2] And not *bnàma*, as it should have sounded and does really sound "mothers". See above, pp. 118–19. [Ed., *Khris. Ves.*]

[3] If this supposition turns out to be justified, and the word *antswà* is not of Sumero-Babylono-Assyrian origin (from *An*, *Anu*), its significance as a term employed in the history of religious beliefs generally will be greatly increased.

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which is *Khetsia*.[1] He has one sister from whom descends the demon family; that is why *antswə* has no right to destroy once for all the demons, his blood relations.

The Abkhasians appear to have made their gods after the image of man; one and the same god can be both good and evil in relation to a given person, according to the zeal with which he fulfils his duties towards him. The only means by which an angered god can be placated is by open-hearted confession and sacrificial offerings. And as the Abkhasians have a great number of gods their whole life is passed in continuous prayer and offering to gods.

I. Àyt'ar-nə̀hwa*

1. *Jabrən*

The Abkhasians make preparations for Shrovetide with particular solemnity, for its approach coincides with the observance of a series of religious rites and offerings, known under the general name of *Àyt'ar-nə̀hwa*. Àyt'ar is a great god of procreation and fertility, particularly with regard to the breeding of cattle. He is, as we shall see presently, the head of a whole pleiade of gods, who appear to be subordinate to him, and each of whom constitutes a part of him. *Nə̀hwa*, which is derived from *a-nə̀hwara*, to pray, denotes praying, prayer, whence *Àyt'ar-nəhwa*, meaning prayer, offering, to Ayt'ar.

The first in order of offerings is that performed in honour of the god *jabrən*, i.e. god of the goats (and sheep) (see above, p. 120).

On the Sunday, the last day of Shrovetide, the eldest woman of the family leavens dough from the flour of *ashə̀* (Georgian *shvria*, oat)[2] and places it in a warm corner. The dough is often kneaded with a stick, called *adswə̀*,† made specially for this purpose from the hazel tree, on account of which the dough itself is called *adswərsa*, a combination of *adswə̀*, a stick with a tapering end, and *ərsara*, to knead.

On the Shrove Thursday the eldest woman of the family—*ap'hwəs-isk'ya* ("woman pure")—takes a portion of this leaven, kneads it with the stick, adds some water and flour, boils it, and then bakes maizebread—*amgyal*. This maizebread must be baked on a hearth.

* For the pronunciation of "h" see p. 119, n. *. The combination "hw" represents a labialized variety of "h". [Translator's Note.]

† The combination "*dsw*" which is to be pronounced with one breath impulse, represents a labialized variety of "*ds*". For this latter sound see p. 329 (*ə'*). [Translator's Note.]

[1] N. Y. Marr, *On the Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians* (in Russian), in *Khristianskii Vostok*, "The Christian East," St. Pb., 1915, vol. iv, issue 1, p. 138.
(A translation of this work is given in this number, pp. 157–180, see p. 171. Ed. *Georgica*.)

[2] It should be noted that in all these sacrificial offerings oat flour and, on rare occasions, millet flour, is used. Without this flour or unless it is at least used as an ingredient the offering becomes inadmissible. The reason for this is probably because *ashə̀* (and *ghomi*, millet) alone constituted the staple food.

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When the woman places the dough on the hearth, she holds over it a pure *sulguni* (a round of cheese),[1] from the centre of which she cuts out a small round piece and places it in the middle of the maizebread; with the exception of this middle part, the maizebread is lenten. When placing the dough on the hearth, she scatters bits of it, first in the direction of the sea, and then towards the mountains; and, as if calling to the goats, she says, *reyt, reyt* (the goat call), and mutters the following prayer: "Thou, *jabràn*, the great part of the great god (*Àyt'ar intswakhwodù jabràn*)! Grant us the warmth of thine eyes and of thy heart. Be the guardian of our herds! Bear goodwill unto us so that no harm should befall our herds, except their old moulted wool and old dung!" Apart from this introduction, which is always used, each says an improvised prayer. After this is over, as if calling to the goats they again exclaim, *reyt, reyt*, turning alternatively towards the sea and the mountains.

When the maizebread is baked, and the goats have returned from the fields, the eldest man in the family prays to god *jabràn*, muttering approximately the formula quoted above. The whole family joins him in uttering *dämen*, and the candles are lighted.

It is to be noted that during the prayer the participants also invoke the "god" *mkyamgaria*,* and say: "May thy bounty never fall short on us." It seems to me that this deity is no other than the "Megrelianized" angels Michael and Gabriel (Geo. *Mik'el da Gabrieli*), with whom Christianity endeavoured, in vain, to replace Àyt'ar and his "parts" of gods; up to this day the pagan deities still take precedence, although they also pray to *mkyamgaria*.

The maizebread is first cut into four parts with two strokes of the knife, and only afterwards into small pieces; the neighbours are not forgotten either, a piece being sent to each. The maizebread is baked in rhododendron (*à-k'wazhwa*)† leaves.

2. *Zhwabràn* (god of cows)[2]

This rite is performed in the same manner as jabràn. The prayer begins thus: "Thou *zhwabràn*, the great part (of the great deity)

* The palatal or mid-lingual semi-vowel "*y*" in "*k'y*", "*gy*", as also in "*ky*", "*qy*", "*shy*", "*qy*", etc., met with in this article, lingualizes or iotizes the preceding consonant sound, the combinations "*k'y*", "*gy*", etc, representing lingualized or iotized varieties of "*k'*", "*g*" (pronounced hard, as in "go"), etc. For the pronunciation of simple radical sounds see p. 328. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

† See p. 131, note *.

‡ In Abkhasian *ktshyashwa*, pure cheese; cf. Megrelian (I. Kipshidze, *The Megrelo-Russian Dictionary*, s.v. *ené'ari*) *tsk'ebas*, which is also an Abkhasian expression, denoting "pure (*a-tsk'ya*), good (*à-bza*)".

[2] In Guria this observance is known under the name of *boloba* (an abstract form of *bosli*, cowhouse) or *iloroba*; the latter probably has some connection with St. George of Ilori. The Gurians often call a cow *ilora*. In Megrelia the god of cattle-breeding is known as *Zhini-An'ar*.

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Àyt'ar!" etc. The dough is kneaded from the same leaven, only when calling to the cows they exclaim *wootsw*. Shrove Saturday is dedicated to *zhwabrən*.

3. *Anəkha-nəḥwa* (*Dopu-nəkha*)

Near Adzvibzha is a little village called Dopukət, where dwell the Dopua-s who are attendants (Geo. *me-khat-ur-i*) of the "icon"—*Dopu-nəkha*, revered by all the Adzvibzhaans and Dopukətans. This "icon" is known also as *shwəjən-nəkha*, i.e. Sujuna icon, under which is meant, no doubt, St. George of Sujuna in Megrelia. This "icon" is called *zhwarək'yə* by the wives of the Dpua-s, for the reason that the wives of Abkhasians have no right to call by name the eldest members of their husband's *gvari*, or his relations. D. I. Gulia thinks that the word *zhwarak'yə* is the same as the Georgian *zvarаki*, meaning sacrificial animal (the ancient Georgian *zuaraki* = *zowaraki*, Armenian *zowarak*).[1] In honour of this "icon" every Adzvibzhaan and Dopukətan family bakes, on the Shrove Sunday, a cake from millet flour (*sorghum*, in Geo. *ghomi*), which is offered as a gift to it. Prayers are said by the head of each family, and a handful of salt and a piece of wax candle are put aside for the "icon". The eldest of the Dopua goes round the houses and collects the salt and wax.

Mamsər Dopua told us: "At the present time our icon is in the village Sujuna."

4. *Àyt'ar-nəḥwa* (*khwazhwə-kərə*, in the Bzyb dialect *khwazhw-kərə*)

On the first Monday[2] of the Great Fast the ritual of supplication to Àyt'ar himself is observed. This supplication is otherwise called *khwazhwə-kərə* (in the Bzyb dialect *khwazhw-kərə*). *À-khwazhwə* (Bzyb. *ə-khwazhw*) is a special cake, sometimes coniform, and sometimes of round flattened shape. These cakes, which may be stuffed with cheese or not, but on this occasion are lenten, are invariably included in sacrificial offerings of the Abkhasians. They may be boiled, as on this occasion, or baked. *A-kərə* denotes "to hold". After it is called, in Abkhasian, the month of February, *khwazhwəkən-mzə* (*a-mza*, month, moon). *À-khwazhwə* (Bzyb. *ə-khwazhw*) denotes also rhododendron, the leaves of which are indispensable in the making of sacrificial maize-cakes.

[1] As a cult term this word is met with in the form ⴆⴁⴐⴓ in Sabaean (Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier*, ii, 24, 87, cf. p. 191, n. 179), see N. Marr, *The Baptism of the Armenians, Georgians, Abkhasians and Alans*, etc. (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society, St. Pb., 1906, vol. xvi, p. 203. (Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

[2] The Megrelians call this Monday *t'ut'askhia bedniери*, lucky, or happy Monday, lit. the moon-day. With the Abkhasians, too, *Ayt'ar's* day is Monday; they pray to the moon exclusively on Mondays.

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796 sacrificial maize-cakes. Also on this day, in the early evening, are prepared from the above-mentioned leaven many *ȧ-khwazhwə*, and three loaves, made in the shape, respectively, of the moon, the sun, [243] and *alaẖwara*.[1] In the latter are placed as many *aklakŭt-s* (little wooden hammers, models of those used in threshing millet, or maize) as there are women in the family and an extra one symbolizing the desire for their increase. This correlation of the number of hammers [462] with the number of women in the family arose, of course, from the fact that the threshing of millet was the woman's job. Soups of phasel and of fresh nettle (*ȧ-khwats*) are also prepared. On this day no edible [768] herb of any kind is allowed to be consumed, or used in cooking; [963] *dsdsəm*, the Abkhasians say, that is, "it is not proper," "it is forbidden" (in Megrelian *vashiners*).

[512] Late in the afternoon, when the cattle have returned from the fields, the prayers begin.

(*a*) *Antswȧ-ẖwa* (for God).[2]

The whole family gathers together. On the threshold of the [340] house, *dishwa*, is placed a long and narrow table (in Megrelian *tabaki*), [352] on which are laid all the eatables described above. Behind this little table stands the head of the family, and behind him all the other members. The wax candles are lighted. The head of the family takes three *ȧ-khwazhwə*, and, addressing *Antswȧ*, God, prays that His favours and bounties may be showered upon his family, etc. The family repeat with him, *ȧȧmən*. These cakes are put aside.

(*b*) *Àyt'ar*.

After this the head of the family takes three new *a-khwazhwə*, and says: [539] *Wa, Àyt'ar—bzhwȧyt'ar! bzhyə-nȧkhak zəndp-yanŭ, bzhyə—tswəmzȧh zəkȧdr—dso*, etc., "*O, Àyt'ar—seven Àyt'ar, in the hands of whom are seven icons (to whom are subject seven gods), and to whom are lit seven candles,"—be thou the guardian of our herds! Multiply them so that we may milk seven men's load of milk! Let no harm come to our herd, except the old wool and old dung!* etc. The introduction, given in Abkhasian, is uttered by all, while everybody improvises the rest of the supplication as best they can, repeating the mystic number 796 801 seven every minute. As is shown by the introduction *Àyt'ar* is the head of a group of seven gods. The number seven appears in many prayers.[3]

[243] [1] *Alaẖwara*—a large mortar (Geo. *tchashuri*) in which millet (*ghomi*) is husked.

[193] [2] *hwa* is an abbreviated form of the word denoting "he says"; cf. the Russian *govt* heard in the existing colloquial speech.

[821] [191] [3] All this, and the fact that the Abkhasians up to this day still pray to the moon and the sun, makes us wonder whether the septenary *Àyt'ar* is closely connected with the Babylono-Assyrian septenary of gods, particularly as the names of the gods *Aa, Aaa—Antswȧ*, and *Ištar—Àyt'ar*, are very similar, while the moon and the sun are included in both pleiades.

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The Megrelians also know this septenary, *shk'vit'-ul-i*, in honour of which the majority of families let loose a cow with a pierced ear. Her milk is not used for food. The bullock is offered in sacrifice, while the heifer is reared. The well-known Pshav *Kviria* is, perhaps, related to Megrelian Àyt'ar. I have pointed out above that among the Megrelians the god of cattle-breeding is called *Zhini Ant'ar*. *Ant'ar* is the Abkhasian *Àyt'ar*, while *zhini*, in Megrelian, "high," "heavenly," is equivalent to Abkhasian *khikh*. The Abkhasians, however, appear to have split up *Zhini Ant'ar* into two gods, *Àyt'ar* and *Khikh*. They appeal for help to the latter in the spring, when the cattle are taken to the mountain pastures. They pray to him under the shadows of trees. On four pillarets are placed poles, which are covered with leaves of trees, particularly of the wild hazel tree, the oak, or yoke-elm. A cheese curd wrapped in chestnut tree bark is placed on this table (*ashwamkydt'*)* which is covered with greenery; on it is also placed *dtchamah'wa*, a kind of millet porridge, cooked with cheese. In front of it is also placed milk gruel. Women are not allowed to be present. The head of the family, standing with uncovered head in front of this green table, called *ashwamkydt'*, prays that *Khikh*, the great part of the great deity Àyt'ar, may increase his cattle and send all good things. While praying he spills a little of the gruel towards the sea and towards the mountains, uttering *wootsw*. The prayer over, he takes the cheese curd and passes over it cross-wise a hazel "knife", which is really a stick cut into a tapering, knife-like shape, after which he actually cuts the cheese curd with a real knife.[1] This ceremony of prayer is followed by a dinner, the remains of which are not cleared away. Three of the supports or legs of *ashwamkydt'* are cut off (each with one stroke), the fourth remains there untouched. It seems to me probable that the table itself received its name from this act of cutting. Megrelians also know this *ashwamkydt'*, which they call *sumkvat'* (*sumi keti*), "three sticks," derived, perhaps, from *sumkvat'*, in which case it would denote "three cuttings" (*kvat'* < *kvat'ua* = to cut, to fell), i.e. "cut with three strokes."[2]

The Georgian Mountaineers also have their *Anator-i*.

(c) *Alèshkintr* (*alèshintr*).

These cakes are also put aside. The prayer now takes three new

* The combination *shw* represents a labialized variety of "*sh*"; cf. "*shw*", p. 120, note *. In *ashwamkydt'* the "*sh*" is not only labialized, but also lingualized or lotised, which lingualisation is not, however, represented in the transcription. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] By using the wooden knife, the Abkhasian probably pays tribute to that very ancient time when his ancestors used that kind of knife.

[2] If the first part *shumu* represents the Megrelian word "three", one should keep in mind not the "K'art'lianised" form *sumi*, but the original, Tubal-Kainian *shumi*; see MARR, *From the Journeys to Somtia* (in Russian), in *Christ. Vostok*, ii, pp. 17–18. (Editor, *Christ. Vost.*)

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1796 *à-khwazhw* and entreats god *Alèshkintr* to grant the house faithful dogs—those best friends of man and reliable watchers of his weal; the prayer at the same time spills some of the hot *a-k'warəpà* or *a-*
[202] *k'warpà* (a thick broth of *à-khwazhw*, or millet) towards the sea and some towards the mountains, uttering "*Wootsw!* Burn out the tongue
[168] of the evil-speaker, the eyes of the evil-eyed", and continues his prayer.
[116] In the opinion of the commission, *Alèshkintr* is also "part" of *Àyt'ar*. *Ala* denotes dog; *shkintr*, however, is incomprehensible.

The commission explained that "dog" was mentioned before
[23] "man" on account of the former being more capable of loyalty to a master than the latter.

671 It should be noted that the common law values the blood of a
685 dog in proportion to that of its owner; the blood of a baron's dog is
825 equal to that of a baron, of a peasant's to that of a peasant, etc.

539 From the lips of K. Dolbaia (Abkh. Delba), an 80-year-old Abkha-
231 sian, who possesses an expert knowledge of the Abkhasian language, I wrote down the following tale:—

"In ancient times, when Abkhasia was inhabited by giants and devas (daevas), Aslan, one of the giants, would not leave the devas in peace. Once, when he was asleep, the devas crept up stealthily, bound him with silk laces, blinded and killed him, and threw him into a pit as deep as a well. On their return from their usual hunting expedition, his dogs discovered their master, but they could not pull him out of the well. They fell upon an ox-cart driver who happened to be passing by, and compelled him to rescue their master from the well and unbind him. The dogs licked Aslan for three days and three nights, and so brought him back to life and restored his sight." [1]

[801] The following superstition prevails among the Abkhasians. If someone, noticing the heavens bursting open, succeeds in uttering *Làri, vàri, khəzò, jkhwàri*, he will have all his wishes fulfilled. Only one woman was honoured with this great good fortune, the widow of a Mukvabba. *Làri* is interpreted as *lala* which denotes dog; *vàri*
[192] (*vàri* from *aowyò*,* man) as man; *khəzò* as whey; *jkhwàri* as the crust of millet porridge; uttered together they are supposed to mean "make me rich". My Abkhasian advisers repeatedly emphasized that the dog was mentioned first because of its unexampled loyalty and fidelity to man, his master.

1116 (*d*) *Àmza-nəhwa*, Prayer to the Moon.
1196 The supplicant takes the moon-shaped cake and says: "Thou,

[104] * See p. 122, note *. According to Marr, the throat participates vigorously in the pro/nuction of this composite or diffusive sound, and in a way as if the sound of the guttural "ɣ" (the ancient Arabic *'ain*) were also heard. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[171] [1] The Academician N. Y. Marr has kindly directed my attention to Moses of Khoren, who describes how by order of Semiramis, the dogs of *Araïk* (cf. *Alèshkintr*) licked the corpse of *Aru* or *Areïa*, the Armenian Prince, in order to revive him.

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Àmza, the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, guard over our men! Grant them beauty and strength!" Simultaneously the men-folk crowd around him, for the moon is the god of men; the women-folk stand at a distance. "Increase our cattle and all our weal! Burn out the eyes of the spell-binders, and the tongues of the evil-speakers! *Wootsw*, *Wootsw*!" the supplicant continues his incantation and, calling to the cattle, spills *k'uarpa* (*a-k'warpà* or *a-k'worpà*) now in the direction of the sea, now towards the mountains.

"The moon is a man, and the sun is a woman," say the Abkhasians.

I will now quote from my notes the following brief account of a very characteristic Abkhasian tale:

(1) "Seven very rich Abkhasian brothers had no sisters; whereat they were very aggrieved. Eventually, however, a sister was born, but from that moment the wealth of the brothers began to diminish; every night some invisible power drove away their cattle in herds. The youngest brother who was endowed with the gift of prescience (*ashàna*) said to the others: 'A demon has entered our house in the guise of our sister; if we do not kill him, our days and those of all in the whole district are numbered!' The brothers, however, would not listen to him. Thereupon he left his home, and travelled abroad, where he married a beautiful maiden-sun (*Àmra*). After several years, feeling home-sick, he set out to visit his brothers. Alas! what did he find? There was nobody left alive in the whole district except a mouse and his own sister-demon (the witch). She at once devoured his horse, and stepped aside to sharpen her teeth. On the advice of the mouse, the moon-brother, to save his life, took to his heels; he managed to inform his wife-sun of his misfortune, who hastened to deliver him. But the sister overtook her brother and began to devour him. By this time his wife Àmra had arrived. She pulled her husband, *Àmza*, towards her, but the demon pulled also; and so a deadlock ensued. *Antswà* decided the matter thus: he allowed the wife-sun to have her husband, the moon, for fifteen days, and the demon to have him for the remaining fifteen days of the month. And from that time began the phases of the moon. As soon as the moon becomes full it means that the demon has begun to devour Àmza, on which account the moon diminishes gradually; towards the end of Àmza's life his wife, full of love, comes to the rescue of her unfortunate husband, and as her caresses and care restore him to life the moon waxes again. When it is full the demon reappears and the story repeats itself!"

(2) "The Eclipse of the Moon. During the eclipse a monster, Atv (*Atwys*), falls upon the moon to devour it. In order to save their

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539 [789] benefactor, the moon, the Abkhasians fire at the monster and thereby drive him away." [1]

(3) The Moon and the Sun. A beautiful Abkhasian widow woman had a son and a daughter, who often absented themselves from home for the whole day; they would go off early in the morning and return only late in the evening. No amount of coaxing or tenderness on the part of the mother sufficed to keep the children at home or stop them from indulging in their daily adventure, so she decided to shadow them. She found they were seated under the shadow of an ancient oak, in a thick forest, enjoying themselves in an agreeable pastime with the moon and the sun. Before them were all sorts of eatables. The mother, flying into a passion, flung fresh dung at the moon and the sun. The sun-sister, being a more fastidious creature, washed herself, but the less particular moon-brother did not do so, and hence arose the dark patches on the moon; the brother, the moon, and the sister, the sun,[2] then soared up to the sky for ever, while the widow and her children returned home."

821 Here I will also note that the Abkhasians always welcome the new moon by looking at its reflection through a mirror, or over a silver piece.

[753] A certain mainly infantile disease, similar to convulsions, is called by the Abkhasians *ámzakra*, i.e. " to be caught by the moon ".

(e) *Àmra-nǐhwa*, Prayer to the Sun.

794 [816] When he has finished the invocation addressed to Àmza (the moon), the supplicant takes the sun-shaped cake, and, with the women surrounding him, he says: " Thou, Àmra, *Àyt'ar inǐwakhwədà*, the great part of the great *Àyt'ar*, grant warmth, and caress the women of our family! Increase our cattle," etc., and then spills *k'warpa* (*a-k'warpà*) in the usual manner, uttering *wootsw*.

According to D. I. Gulìa, in the village of Dchilou they use the form *Amera* instead of *Àmra*.

(f) *Andp'a-nàga*.

[816] After that the supplicant takes *alaǐwəra* (a large mortar) and, addressing himself to the god *Andp'a-nàga*, says: " Thou, the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, send us the warmth of thine eyes and of

[1] Exactly what *Atǐwyə* denotes is difficult to explain. In connection with the above quoted tale, the etymology of this word may, however, perhaps elucidate its significance. *Atə* denotes the barn- or screech-owl; *wy* may be the root from the word *a-wyə* (man); consequently *atǐwyə* may denote " man-owl ". And by *atǐwyə* is, perhaps, understood the sister devouring the brother-moon.

[2] Their gender is often confused: sometimes the moon and the sun are sisters or brothers, sometimes the moon is brother and the sun sister.

[3] I think the Georgian word *mizezi*, cause, is derived from the Abkhasian *amzəə*, cause (from *ámza*, moon). (It is doubtful! Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

thy heart! Grant us such a crop of maize that at its gathering we shall have to bend the stalks with a hook (Geo. *Kavi*), and cut them down with a bill!" *K'uarpa* (*a-k'wərpá*) is then spilled, and the cattle is called by shouting *wootsw*. *Anàp'a-nàga* is the harvest god. In my opinion the etymology of these words is as follows: *Ap'ará* denotes "to twist or twine" something (a rope, for example), as well as "to pass with difficulty through something", for instance, a maize or millet field, crowd, etc.; *nágara*—to carry: *inap'òo ingo*—carriest thou by forcing thy way, by pushing asunder.

There is also an evil spirit of the harvest called *Jaja*, but we will speak of her (she is a goddess) separately, as she is not a member of this septenary.

(*g*) *Atchshò-shyashyàna* (god of horses).

Finally, the supplicant takes the cake whose shape represents a horse (or three *à-khwazhwa*), and entreats (the god) *Atchshò shyashyàna* —the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, to increase his horses (donkeys and asses). Again *wootsw* and *ak'warpá*. The word *atchshò* denotes horse; *shwyashyàna* or *shashana* is incomprehensible.

With this ceremonial *Àyt'ar-nòhwa* ends.

Judging from what has already been said above, it is clear that *Àyt'ar* is the head of a whole pleiade of gods, each of whom constitute a special part of him; it is noteworthy that in every supplication addressed to any one of these gods, *Àyt'ar* is also invariably referred to as one whose part is the deity in question. The religio-philosophical mind of the Abkhasians has arranged the hierarchy of these gods in the following order:—

ÀYT'AR: JABRÀN, ZHWABRÀN, ALÀSHKINTR, ÀMZA, ÀMRA, ANÀP'A-NÀGA, AND ÀTCHSHÒ-SHYASHYÀNA.

Àyt'ar is one in seven parts. This conception of God in parts is prominently expressed in *Àyt'ar*.

(*h*) *Lòmilah* (*Nòmirah* or *Shòmirah*).

Àyt'ar-nòhwa ends with *Lòmilah*. What this word denotes is difficult to explain. It appears to denote the god of conjugal happiness of the youth.

On the same evening, after the conclusion of *Àyt'ar-nòhwa*, the young people, boys and girls, meet at one of their houses, and begin to predict their fortunes. It is a time of laughter and gaiety, and the young people enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. *A-khwakwàr* of usual size is prepared in great quantities; and also enough of a smaller size, extremely salt in flavour, to enable each participant to have three. In one of these small *akwakwàr* is placed a hazel chip, called *dnasp'adsw*, "stake of happiness." Each person is given three

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4. *The Gathering of Medicinal Herbs*

On Maundy Thursday, young maidens, led by old women, go into a forest early before the dawn, to gather medicinal herbs. They must neither converse nor look back. When they dig out the herb, they throw salt into the soil, murmuring "*Àdgilə-dedop'al, bəhhwə bàl'eyt*, the Queen-Earth, we have returned to thee thy share". The following herbs are considered as particularly healing: (*a*) *ajmshyə-rshwəga*, *Arum albispatum*,[1] literally denoting: *ajmshyə*, eyebrow; *ashwəga*, "that with which they paint (a paint)"; it is used against diphtheria and scarlet fever; (*b*) *aziqyil* or *abgar lomha*, *Aristolochia pontica*[1] (birthwort); the second Abkhasian term denotes, literally, "jackal's ear," used against erysipelas (St. Anthony's fire); and (*c*) *ajaqwa*, veratrum, according to Tchubinov (Geo. *Kharis-dzira*). Having finished gathering, they return home in silence and without looking back.

Maundy Thursday is called by the Abkhasians *tchatchkhadəl*, derived, in all probability, from the Megrelian *tsashkha didi*, "the great Thursday."

5. *Jaja*[2]

On Maundy Thursday the Abkhasians offer a sacrifice to the goddess of fruitfulness (of husbandry and horticulture) called *Jaja*. For this occasion the Abkhasian women prepare all sorts of lenten dishes, taking care always to include a pumpkin. The dishes are placed outside the house, in a corn-field, the offering to *Jaja* being accompanied by a supplication as follows: "The great *Jaja*! We have done all that was required of us, and have made the customary offering. We therefore humbly entreat thee to show thy bounty towards us and grant us a good harvest in the field and in the kitchen garden!" As I have stated before, the Abkhasians have no set prayer formulas, and each prays as best he can.

As always, the offering is left for a few minutes wherever it was placed, and the supplicants stand before it, and watch with emotion how the spirit of the goddess invisibly satiates herself with the gifts of men! Needless to say they themselves consume the "remains".

As I have already remarked, there are two Abkhasian gods of fruitfulness: the god *Anàp'a-nàga* and the goddess *Jaja*.[3] *Jàja*, as imagined by an Abkhaz, is a broad-shouldered woman, of small stature. More than once Abkhasians have seen her wandering about the fields

[1] According to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden.

[2] It is of interest to elucidate what relation *Jaja* holds to Georgian *jojoba*; see I. Javakhishvili, *A History of the Georgian Nation* (in Georgian), p. 138.

[3] The relation of these two gods is difficult to determine; nor do we know the relation of *Jaja* to *Ayt'ar*.

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belonging to those who have failed to propitiate her, and muttering: "Corncobs (of Indian corn) of a digit size, corncobs of a digit size!" But if the owner of the field succeeds in frightening her and making her say *rdki, dzakə, rdki dzakə*, "of a cubit size," he will have a magnificent harvest.

On the day of *tchatchkhadə́l*, after the offering has been made to *Jaja*, the seeds are taken for the first time into the kitchen garden.

6. *Àmshap'*

Easter Day is celebrated with great solemnity by all the Abkhasians. It must be noted that the Abkhasians to-day have no notion whatever of the Christian conception of this day. Even the greeting, "Christ is risen," usual on this day, is wanting in the Abkhasian language. Everyone able to afford it has a new dress made for this day. To emphasize the poverty of a person the Abkhaz says, "Even for *Àmshap'* he could not get himself new clothes." This is almost the only day when an Abkhaz considers it necessary to send to church at least one of the members of his family. And the service in the church begins early enough to enable it to be finished by sunrise. Everyone is in haste to be the first to light a wax candle and to place a painted egg on the graves of their dead. The Muhammadan Abkhasians also follow this custom, although they do not light the candles. It is known that Abkhasians bury their dead near their homes, in the places favoured by the deceased, and the graves, therefore, are scattered about the village. Owing to this custom the whole village is illuminated on this day of *Àmshap'*.

On this day each family must slaughter some animal. And those of the Abkhasians who follow the established custom of Paschal offerings, immolate two or three animals according to what his obligation is, what he "owes"—this word denotes "obliged", "must", "owes".

(*a*) *Antswakhwə́* (or *Antswakhwa*).

This is a compound word, consisting of *Antswə́*, God, and (*a*)-*khwə́*, part, share, and denoting "share of God", "for God", more exactly "to render to God that which is due to Him", briefly "praying to God". On this day most of the Abkhasians reverently offer up their prayers to God; but not all of them. There are families who are "not obliged" to render to God "His share". I have already mentioned that the Abkhasian makes offerings only to those gods under whose power his parents or he himself had come, and thus had become his tributary, so to speak. Very often separate members of a family have, in addition to the general family guardian-gods, their own personal

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guardians, whose power extends to his descendants, but not to those of his brothers or sisters. In the village of Adzvibzha almost everyone is obliged to carry out this " praying to God ", Christians as well as Muhammadans.

Every Abkhaz keeps in his cellar, in honour of " God ", a special pitcher filled with must of the very best grade. However great his need, an Abkhaz will not, for any consideration in the world, open this " sacrificial " pitcher until the celebration of the cult of " praying to God ".[1] Early in the morning, on returning from the church, the head of the family surrounded by the male members of his household, sacrifices a young he-goat over the " sacrificial " pitcher, and entreats " the great God to receive graciously the humble offering made by him in accordance with the instructions of his forefathers . . ." He humbly entreats the Great God " punish us not for our faults and trespasses ", etc. After this the meat of the immolated goat is boiled, and sacrificial wheat-cakes are baked. All this is taken down into the cellar, and placed in front of the sacrificial pitcher. The members of the family kneel down, while the head of the family reverently cleans and opens the pitcher, and, holding in his left hand a hazel stick upon which the heart and liver of the goat are transfixed, he prays *Antwsa-du* (to great God) that He grant him and his family a long and happy life. In his prayer he never fails to mention that they are performing the rite " in the manner they were taught by their fathers and grandfathers ". Afterwards he fills a glass with wine from the pitcher and pours it on the heart and liver and the sacrificial cakes; he then passes the latter, with the wine, three times over the heads of the supplicants who are kneeling down, and says: " Grant us the warmth of Thine eyes and of Thine heart! Protect us from all infirmities and sickness." Then follows again the libation of wine Now they all rise, turn round from right to left, and each places a piece of frankincense on burning coals. For a few minutes they all stand still humbly, while the great God " receives " their offerings, and then, with strict observation of order of seniority, a glass of wine and a small piece of the heart and liver is given to each of the participants. It should be noted that only the household members are allowed to partake of these sacrificial offerings. Even the married daughters of the family are treated as strangers, and they are not allowed to share in the offerings with their husbands and children. It is sinful even to think of the sale of the wine. In most of the families the female sex is generally forbidden to partake of this offering.

Thus do the Abkhasians perform annually the domestic offering to God of " His share ". But every three to five years each Abkhaz

[1] The same applies to other " sacrificial pitchers " referred to below.

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8. *Thursday of Easter Week*

(*dsatchȍkhur, mardyȁni t'argyalȁz*)

796 On the Thursday of Easter week the Abkhasians offer a sacrifice [796] to *dsatchȍkhur, mardyȁni t'argyalȁz*. I do not know what the first word denotes. *Mardyȁni* is the Megrelian *mardiani* (Geo. *madliani*) and denotes "beneficent", "blessed", "abundant"; while *t'argyalȁz* is derived from the Georgian word *mt'avar-angelozi*, archangel; it is not clear, however, which of the archangels is meant. According to the explanation of the Commission, this "icon" punishes the offending family by causing the death, in particular, of children. "If there are children in the family, it does not touch the adults," commented the Commission. Sacrifice to this "icon" is always offered by an oak tree. On the Thursday, early in the morning, sacrificial cakes are baked, and the whole family repair to their oak, which is usually situated nearby within the enclosure. Everybody kneels, [780] facing eastward, and the head of the family makes a bloodless offering consisting of *akwakwȁr* and cakes, and entreats the great Dsatchkhur, the beneficent T'argialaz, to forgive them their trespasses, voluntary or involuntary. *Ȁămen* say the whole family. The oak tree is decorated [824] with pieces of many coloured stuffs, some fastened with nails and [778] some with wax. This oak is sacred and to fell, damage, or defile it is strictly forbidden.

[780] On the same day, in the evening, but this time at home, the family make a blood offering to *T'argyalȁz*. A fattened capon is immolated and cakes are again baked. Some families keep pitchers with "sacrificial wine" in his honour.

[789] "In ancient times when people were not so depraved, T'argialaz procured for the day of offering a wild he-goat as his victim," Osman Kamkia informed me, "just as the Ilori 'icon' procured an ox. Now he no longer does so, for we are not worthy of his favours!" concluded the old man, sighing. The peasants Kamkia are *me-khat-ur-n-i* (Geo.), i.e. "attendants of the 'icon'." They keep a little cottage (*ṗ'atskha*) [778] where the "god" is supposed to dwell invisibly. A money-box is kept in the cottage, into which the faithful drop copper coins used exclusively for the purchase of sacrificial offerings.

An old Megrelian, whose name has unfortunately become effaced in my note-book, told me the following:—

778 789 "The all-powerful and miraculous icon, Dsatchkhur, was removed by the Svans from the Salkhino church, and taken to Svanet'i, where it remained for a long time; in the end, however, moved by pity for the Megrelians, the icon returned of its own accord and alighted on an oak which stands on the picturesque hill of Salkhino. Near this

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oak the Megrelians built a church in its honour, in which this icon rests to this day. It has not forgotten the Svans whom it often visits." My Megrelian informant is an inhabitant of Salkhino.

9. *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*

Abkhasians call the first Sunday after Easter Low Sunday, *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*, i.e. Pascha for women. This day is set apart for public games. Early in the morning everybody assembles in the public square where they indulge in all sorts of sport, chiefly, however, horse racing and tournaments. Next day the Abkhasians go back to work, and ordinary life is resumed.

The public games (on holidays) are continued till Whit Monday.

10. *Àdsyla-nəhwa*

In connection with *Àmshap'* mention may be made of two supplications, *Àdsyla-nəhwa* (cf. III (*d*)) and "*Supplication of the Leybaa*". I have not been lucky enough to have witnessed the latter ceremony, which, by the way, belongs to a cult of the Bzib Abkhasians.[1] The worship of the tree, so picturesquely described by ancient writers, such as Strabo, Procopius of Cæsarea, is preserved in a most conspicuous form with its sacred grove, in this supplication of the Leybaa *gvari*, as is also the name of the deity, in that of *Àdsyla-nəhwa*; *Àdsyla* denotes tree, *nəhwa* (*anəhwara*), praying, supplication. The deity of the tree itself is called *Àdsyla-intswakhwə*, wherein the latter part denotes "his (of the male rational being) part of god, deity". The Abkhasians in their religion personify and "intellectualize" all manifestations of life, and they strictly distinguish the gender of each of them.

In order to protect wanton children who roam about without restraint, and love to climb trees, the Abkhasians make offerings to the "spirit of the tree", entreating the "great part of the deity of the tree" to guard their children against falling off trees and hurting themselves. The objects offered are capon and cakes. The oak (*a-j*) they consider as the sacred tree, to which they make the offering; walnut-trees (particularly the hazel-nut-tree) and yoke-elms are "pure" trees. If someone falls from the tree they must dig up some coal from under the spot where the person fell; if no coal is found, the accident is regarded as serious; and the person will not survive the fall. An offering is also made to the "spirit of the tree" in the case of certain illnesses, as directed by sorceresses, the sick person being supposed to have fallen ill through having incurred the wrath of the spirit.

[1] About this see the article by N. Pateypa, in the *Collaborator of the Transcaucasian Mission* (in Russian), 1912, pp. 107–112, 124–7.

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Notes and Considerations concerning Chapter II

796 It is of great interest to determine which pagan cult approximates, under the name of *Àmshap'*, to Easter, the day of the Resurrection of Christ. I. Javakhishvili states in his well-known *History of the Georgian Nation* (in Georgian) that, according to Dubrovin, the Abkhasians called *Àmshap'* also *Mizitkhu*. In my opinion this is another form of the Abkhasian word *məzəkhwə*, i.e. " part of the moon," derived from *àmza*, moon, and *a-khwə*, dole, part, share. If this supposition is correct, *məzəkhwə* would denote " to give to the moon its share, part ", i.e. " praying to the moon." [1] It should be noted, however, that neither the members of the Commission nor anyone whom I questioned knew anything about this name of *Àmshap'*. It is to be assumed that this name was noted down from the lips of the Mountaineers among whom it had evidently been preserved. In further support of the possible close connection between *Àmshap'* [796] and the moon cult (and the " tree spirit ") there is also the fact that the most important role in these festivals is assigned to St. George of Ilori, to which saint, as Javakhishvili has proved in his aforementioned work, is assimilated the moon cult. The procuring by this saint of a bullock, its " purification " by leading it three times from the mountains to the sea and back, the dedication to him of the cow *adzàtwə*, and, finally, the Gurian name of *zhwabràn*, *Iloroba*, prove that St. George is closely connected with the Abkhasian pleiade. Here is yet another curious fact. In the village of Bandza there is a church dedicated to St. George and called Shourkari. There still exists here the following custom: On the Monday [2] following Low Sunday, after the domestic offering, the populace repair to the church, and on their way, singing *Kyrie eleison*, they uproot a tree without the use of any implement, carry it three times around the wall enclosing the church, and offer it to St. George. The tree is then left within the church enclosure until the next year when it is replaced by a fresh one. This, in my opinion, symbolizes the victory of St. George over the moon (= *t'ut'a* in Megrelian, and over the " tree "). [3] Such a custom also [191] prevails in the village Opshkvit'i, in Lower Imeret'i, where on the 23rd April the populace offers, in the same manner as at Bandza, a tree to St. George. [4]

796 Judging from the description of *The Supplication of the Leybaa*, 191 by the priest N. Pateyna, which has been preserved in its purest state,

[113] [1] Cf. N. Y. Marr, *On the Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians*, p. 133 (or its translation in this Journal, pp. 175–6.)

[2] " Monday " in Megrelian is *t'ut'ashkhà*, that is, the day of the moon (I. Kipshidze, op. cit., s.v. *dghe*). Noteworthy is Lamberti's description of the fear of the moon by the Megrelians.

[3] According to the information given me by Sh. P'aghava and El. Ot'khmezuri.

[4] *O-pshkvit'-i*, judging from its form, is of Megrelian origin.

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Wednesday was the day of the prayer to the tree spirit, with both the Abkhasians and the K'art'vels (and Megrels),[1] which is partly confirmed by the Megrelian name of this day, i.e. *jumashkha*; the latter consists of *juma* and *shkha* (Geo. *dghe*). What does the first component word denote? May it not be derived from the Abkhasian word *ajəma*, she-goat? The Pshavs have preserved the more salient *jumaghis jvari*, wherein *jumaghi* = *ajəmagh* denoting "goat-seed, goat-male", he-goat. This term may have been obtained from the custom of the Abkhasians of dedicating, or offering, exclusively, a goat to the tree spirit. This supposition finds further confirmation in the legend of Dsatchkhur, which procured exclusively for its festivals the wild goat (male).

One may also note the concordance between the names of some days in the Megrelian language, and the fact that it is just on these days that the cult is observed of those gods to whom these days are dedicated. Thus on the Monday (*t'ut'ashkha*) the Abkhasians offer a sacrifice to the moon; on the Wednesday (*jumashkha*) they observe the cult of the tree, and on the Tuesday (*t'akhashkha*) the cult of the mother-earth.[2]

III. NÀN-ḫWA

The Abkhasians call the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin (15th August) (*a*) *Nàn-ḫwa*.[3] They observe with great reverence both *Nàn-ḫwa* and the Lent of the Assumption. With *Nàn-ḫwa* are connected the following superstitions of the Abkhasians:—

(*a*) *Àwyəst'ad-ləkhəra* (Meg. *Dchindchat'oba*)

Abkhasians associate the night before the 1st August with increased activity on the part of evil spirits *dwyəst'ad*, demons; and

[1] N. Janashia evidently here uses *K'art'vel* as a generic term, including Megrels, but etymologically and linguistically such use of the term is definitely inadmissible. (Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

[2] The last two comparisons are made by the author, because for *jumashkha* he had also another etymology in connection with the Abkhasian *a-j*, oak, with which he identifies the Megrelian *ja*, tree; while in the first part (*t'akha-*) of the word *t'akhashkha*, he saw the Megrelian *dikha*, earth, soil. These doubtful etymologies have been eliminated. On the other hand, cf. *nerichi*, in I. Kipshidze's *Grammar of the Megrelian Language*, s.v., where this term is interpreted as "the basis of something, or the ground on which a house stands", and since the prayer dedicated to *nerichi*, or "master, lord" *nerichi*, as to a kind of deity, cannot be performed in a house with a wooden floor, I. Kipshidze concluded "that *nerichi* is god of the earth", in which supposition he was to a certain extent supported by definitions of the same word, given by lexicographers (S. S. Orbeliani: "the external side of the bottom"; Tchubinov (I): "bottom, the lower part of a vessel"; Tchub (II): "the lower part of the vessel, of the pitcher"). These materials N. Janashia supplements in his letter, dated 16th April, thus: "In Imeret'i *nerichi* denotes ceiling (see also V. Beridze, *Sitqvishona*, The Dictionary, s.v.), while in Megrelia, on the other hand, the rite is known under the name of *p'uḷesshi do nerichish khoama*, 'the praying of the foundation and ceiling' if not 'of the floor'." (Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

[3] In my opinion *Nən*(*an*) denotes mother, and *ḫwa*, "says" (from *aḫwara*, see above, p. 124, note 2), that is, "for the mother," "the mother's day."

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they, therefore, take precautionary measures to avoid becoming victims of the malignant will of the evil spirits. Nothing is left outside the house, or in the courtyard; nobody sleeps out of doors. To safeguard themselves from evil spirits, the superstitious attach pieces of wax to their hair. Crosses are made from *a-lakwə̀mha* (Geo. *lekumkha*),[1] to which are appended acanthus leaves, and these are placed at the courtyard gates, house doors, the gates of the kitchen gardens and cornfields, the poultry and cow-houses, etc. Acanthus leaves are hung around the necks of the domestic animals. The Abkhaz is convinced that *dwyəst'ad* dare not approach these crosses, which are also a protection against evil eyes.

During this night the evil spirits go out to look for booty, under the leadership of their mother, *Arapàp* (Meg. *rokapi*). On this expedition they are joined by human beings in whom evil spirits have taken their abode. Some of these evil spirits ride wolves or cats, and devour all the animals left outside by their owners who had no time, or had forgotten to drive them into shelter.[2] All evil spirits without exception stir abroad during this night; they wander growling from village to village and through the forests. For this reason it is easy to find out and catch them, and with this object youths go into the woods, where they make a large fire, using the wood of *a-lakwə̀mha*. The youngsters hide behind the bushes and watch out to see if they can recognize those of their neighbours into whom an evil spirit has entered. It is believed that the demons never pass a bonfire without stopping and warming themselves a little by it. Often quarrels arise on this ground, with unpleasant consequences. This custom of seeking after the evil spirits, "demons," is called *Awyəst'ad lə̀khəra*, which denotes "the catching of the demon"; it is also known under the Megrelian name of *dchindchat'oba*. To this day an Abkhaz believes that an evil spirit can enter into, and remain in, a human body, particularly in that of an old woman.

The chief *dwyəst'ad* is the eldest son of the sister of God, and that is why He, being a blood relation, cannot destroy him, although he may frighten him off with thunder. Here it will be appropriate to quote the following popular story:—

"At the time of the partition of the work between God and the devil, the former, exercising the right of seniority,[3] suggested to the devil that they should divide the world between them. The latter

[1] The Russian *krushina*, according to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden, that is, *alaternus* (R. Eristov mentions the plant *lshukha*, but he does not explain it. Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*).

[2] To safeguard an animal from wild beasts when he strays in the forest, they "bind the mouth" of the wild animals as follows: a pair of scissors is tied and a suitable prayer is uttered. "A sure remedy."

[3] The younger divides, and the elder chooses.

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agreed. During the night God caused the earth to be covered with luxuriant vegetation. Captivated by the beauty of vegetation the devil suggested to God that the best way to divide the world between them would be for one to have the earth and the other the vegetation. God took as his share the earth, and the devil received the vegetation. God then ordered him to remove his vegetation immediately. Only now did the devil realize his mistake, which, however, he rectified thus: he restored the vegetation to God, and in return for it he begged and obtained from Him the right to the souls of those who fall from the trees, having climbed them without first praying to God for their safety. . . ."

(b) *Barbanjia* (*dchiakokona*)

Before sunset on the 14th August the Abkhasian youths light, in their respective courtyards, a fire of flax straw (at present, owing to the lack of this straw, they use dry fern, etc.). Each person leaps thrice through the flame of this fire, shouting " I have burnt the evil spirit; I have burnt the evil spirit ". By so leaping through the flame an Abkhaz " purifies " himself of the evil spirit. After they have leapt three times through the flame each throws a piece of salt into the burning fire, and then, altogether, they begin to beat the fire with sticks to extinguish it, at the same time shouting the above quoted words. At the conclusion of the whole operation, the neighbours inform each other of their victory over the evil spirit by firing a gun. This manner of destroying the evil spirits is called " the burning of the demon " or *Barbanjia*. The denotation of the word is incomprehensible to me.[1]

(c) *Nân-ĥwa*

On the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, the " pure " (eldest) woman in the family prepares *a-ĉha* (" a round bread stuffed with cheese "), boils a cock, and leads the whole family into the kitchen garden. Here they all kneel in front of the blossoming cucumber vine, and the eldest woman makes offering to Nan, saying: " the great Nan (*Nân-du*)! We who offer thee this sacrifice, established by our ancestors, humbly entreat thee to have mercy upon our house: increase it like the stars in the sky! " etc. The kneeling family repeat with her, *Âmen*. But no one knows who *Nan* (*Anan*) is; they only know that she is a goddess of procreation of the human race. Of the Mother of God there is no knowledge whatever.

[1] The Georgian equivalent is *Dchiakokona*, which is observed on Ash-Wednesday. *Dchiakokona*, according to Tchubinov, denotes " the leaping through the fire on Wednesday of Passion-week ".

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796 [969] On this day also they "lay the table", that is, prepare a dinner, for the souls of the deceased, unless the day happens to be one of abstinence, i.e. Wednesday or Friday. In the latter event the feast takes place on the following day.

(e) *Àdsyla-nə̀hwa*

On the same day of the Assumption is observed *Àdsyla-nə̀hwa* (cf. II (10)). The children are taken to a meadow where they are told to place their right legs against a tree. Each holding an *akwakwə̀r* in the right hand, they remain meekly in this position until the eldest in the family has addressed the prayer to "the spirit of the tree", entreating "the great part of the deity of the tree" to safeguard them from giddiness, from falling off the tree, and from injuries. The children must eat their *akwakwə̀r* without removing their legs from the tree.

(f) *Anàna-gùnda* (the goddess of bees)

796 231 This is both a spring and a summer feast.

In the spring, when the bees begin to hive, the eldest ("pure") woman of the family takes some hirse (Geo. *p'etvi*) and an egg, and [796] enters the apiary, where she passes the offerings three times over the hives, and prays to the goddess of the bees, *Anàna-gùnda*: "Submitting these as a pledge that the established offering will be made at the proper time, I humbly entreat thee, *Anàna-gùnda*, to be the guardian of our bees; safeguard them from all illnesses, multiply them, and grant them a good crop!" Hirse and the egg are hung over the apiary.

In the summer, between the 15th July and the end of August, before the gathering of the first honeycombs, more during August, on a Thursday or Saturday, the promised offering to the goddess [780] *Anàna-gùnda* is made. A large corncake (*a-mgal*), stuffed with cheese, is baked, and placed on one of the hives; also an egg. The family kneel in front of the offering, and the "pure" woman again invokes the mercy of *Anàna-gùnda* upon the honey bees, and says an improvised prayer. The family repeat a long drawn out *dàmen*.

After the ceremony, she divides the corncakes crosswise, into four parts, with two strokes of the knife; and cuts these into smaller pieces. The family sit down there and then and dine. They do not [621] forget the neighbours, sending a small piece each. The remains are placed in a basket and hung up in the apiary. Everybody passing by is obliged to enter the apiary and bless the honey bees and, scattering about a little hirse, eat a piece of corncake.

[178] In ancient times when the Abkhasians irreproachably observed all the rites, the gods were more merciful to them. Thus, the goddess

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of the bees as a sign of her good disposition towards a given family placed an egg (the egg of *Anâna-gûnda*) in one of the hives. No matter how much honey they took from that hive, there would always be a plentiful supply of it.[1]

IV. K'IRSA

Christmas is one of the four chief holidays[2] of the year. Abkhasians call it *K'irsa* (Megr. *K'irse*), which denotes Christ. An Abkhaz considers it a great disgrace if he fails on this day to kill a goat or some other animal. On this day "the table is laid" also for the souls of ancestors.

(a) *Agwə-nə̀ĥwa*

For some families it is obligatory to make an offering early in the morning on this day to *Agwə-nə̀ĥwa*, for which *akwakwər* are baked. The supplicant entreats that *Agwə-nə̀ĥwa* grant them the warmth of his eyes and his heart. In translation the word denotes, "praying to heart." This "praying" is also known to the Gurians, under the name of "praying for the womb" (Geo. *Mutslis salotsavi*); Megrelians call it *Khatsitsi*.[3] According to I. Kipshidze, it is the New Year's Day breakfast.[4] In my opinion it is nothing more than a survival of the supplication described below.

(b) *Got'anùa* (*sharp'ə-nə̀ĥwa*)

Some *gvari*-s have preserved to this day the following custom. On Christmas Eve, the family go to bed very early; they rise, however, at midnight, and begin praying. Enough chickens are killed to provide one for every member of the family (blackbirds also may be used), or in their place a young goat; *akwakwər* baked. All this is offered to *Got'anùa*; the food is consumed immediately after the prayer is ended, and the remains, if any, are not left but burnt without fail. All return to bed. The dawn must find them asleep. In Megrelian *got'ənua* denotes morning-twilight, dawn, to grow light, to dawn, the Abkhasian equivalent of which is *sharp'-nə̀ĥwa*, the morning prayer; the Megrelian term, however, is more in use.

I quote here the following story: "A female slave of a family,

[1] *Anâna*, in my opinion, is derived from *an*, mother; *gûnda*, probably from *gundi*, a swarm, a collection of something.

[2] Namely, the New Year, Easter, the Assumption, and Christmas.

[3] *Khatsitsi—khatsetsi* is called also a bride. (Cf. I. Kipshidze, *Gram. of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. *khat'etsi*.) (Ed. *Khrist. Vostok.*)

[4] *Grammar of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. (where is also a reference to the explanation of the same word in Georgian by V. Beridze, *Sitqvishena*, s.v., Ed. *Kh. V.*).

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I quote here the following story: "A female slave of a family, being angry with her masters, took a portion of the dough for *akwakwar* destined for the " god " *Got'anùa*, and placing it in a scoop of bitter-gourd (*akwapey*, Geo. *kopo*), hid it in the loft. As usual the family went to bed after the ceremony. But unfortunately for them the offended *Got'anùa* soundly thrashed all of them, using for the purpose the very same scoop in which had been hidden the dough destined for himself. This *gvari* makes propitiatory offerings at the will of sorcerers to *Got'anùa* twice a year, during the night before Christmas and before the Assumption.

Got'anùa, under the name of *Okhvàmuri*, evidently spread throughout Megrelia during the missionaryship of Lamberti.[1]

V. Deities whose Cults have no Fixed Dates

1. *Et-nòkha—Àga-nòkha*

The sea, like other manifestations of nature, has its own " part of deity ", called *Àga-inkhwò* or *àga-intswakhwò*. An Abkhaz makes an offering to this deity when he goes to the sea coast for any considerable time. The sea deity is not to be trifled with ; if it is slighted it becomes turbulent, it surges, and punishes the unrespectful. Therefore even the children are forbidden to throw pebbles, or to spit into the sea. The wotship of this deity has been preserved in its purest form among the Bzib Abkhasians, namely among the peasantry of the Gudout (Gudaut) district, of the *gvari* of Amp'aràa. It has been described by A. Tch(ukbar), in *Sotrudnik Zakavkazskoy Missii* (" The Collabarator of the Transcaucasian Mission "), 1912, p. 373 sqq., where the deity *Et-nòkh-Àga-nòkha* is called *Et-nykh Ag-Nykh*. *Àga* denotes sea, *(a)nòkh*—" icon." But what does the word *Et* denote ?[2]

2. *Àshkha-intswakhwò* (god of mountains)

Mountains also have " their part of God " known under the name of *Àshkha-intswakhwò*. *Àshkha* denotes mountain ; *intswakhwò*, " his (of the male rational being) part of God." I have pointed out above that the Abkhaz often uses the word *nòkha* in the sense of god, which in the Christian faith is understood, or more correctly, translated, as icon. The god of mountains " governs " all the mountains and the beasts inhabiting them. Abkhaz shepherds make offerings to this god twice a year, in the spring when they drive the cattle to the mountains, and in the autumn when they drive them back. To him are subject also mountain game. In order to preserve the game from

[1] A. Lamberti, op. cit., pp. 148-9.

[2] This word manifests a consonance with the Assyro-Babylonian name of the god of the sea, *Ea*. Is this a mere coincidence ?

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their enemies, the god ordered the bird *aqaqab* to watch over them; the Megrelians who have the same belief, call this bird *kakabi*.[1] As soon as this bird sights at a distance a hunter or some other enemy, it soars high up into the sky, and by screeching warns the game of the approach of danger. That is why this bird is always found near the beasts.

The god of the mountains demands respect. He punishes severely those bold enough to bathe in clear, transparent mountain streams. The Abkhaz shepherds do not, therefore, bathe in these streams, being afraid of drawing upon themselves the displeasure of the god of the mountains: the nude body is said to defile the waters of the mountain spirit.

3. *Azhwèyp'shaă* (gods of beasts and hunting)[2]

Azhwèyp'shaă are gods of beasts and of hunting. They dwell in impassable forests, and lead an ordinary family life. To them are subjected all game, and without their will no one can shoot bird or beast. These gods kill for themselves some wild animal, boil and eat its meat; they wrap the bones in its skin and then revive the animal by striking it with a wand. Only after an animal has been resurrected in this way is a hunter granted the right to shoot it, and then only the particular hunter for whom the gods have destined it: no one else, try as much as he will, can kill it. Of this the Abkhasians are aware, and they employ the following characteristic greeting when they encounter a fellow hunter: *zp'sə-aakhəw yəzp'shər*, "Which is destined to die, that (animal) is waiting for thee!" the answer being, "For both of us is waiting!"

A few words may be said about the way in which Abkhasians divine the success or failure of their hunting on the day of the Assumption. Before starting out the hunter takes a sharp knife and repeatedly strikes the table, cutting nicks in it. Passing his palm over the table, he says: "Whether thou sayest fifteen, whether I say fifteen, whoever says fifteen (it will be) thirty, fifteen." If the nicks thus cut number exactly fifteen it is a good omen; the gods will reward him with game.

The Abkhasians learnt this method in the following manner. A hunter once followed a wild goat, but he could not shoot it. It led him into the thick of a wood, where he saw a huge cauldron, around which sat gods. They invited him to join them. Nearby stood a goat. They killed the latter and invited the hunter to partake of the meal. When the gods began to throw bones into the hide, the hunter concealed one of them, putting in its place a small stick (or a small knife,

[1] The word is consonant with the Georgian *Kakabi*, partridge.
[2] The term is construed as plural.

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4. *Àbna-intswakhwà* (god of the woods)

The woods also have their "part of deity", *Àbna-intswakhwà*. 776 824
Àbna denotes wood, forest; *intswakhwà* we already know. When an Abkhaz enters a forest, or if he has to pass a night there, he prays to this deity for protection. I have, however, failed to collect more information about this god of the woods.

Àbna-wowyà

In ancient times the forests of Abkhasia were inhabited by *Àbna-wowyà*, "forest-people." *Àbna* denotes forest, and *a-wowyà*, man. 539
They were strong and courageous, but very ugly in appearance. Their bodies were covered with bristle-like hair. From their breasts projected a strange object, shaped like an axe and strong as steel, which served as a weapon; and by pressing an enemy to their breasts they could cut him into two. They preyed incessantly upon the people, who, however, in the long run, and with God's help, destroyed them. The last of them dwelt in an impassable forest, called Urak', near the village of Adzvibzha. In the same forest there lived also the courageous Khukhw Dchit'anàà, with his herd. Between Khukhw and this "forest-man" there was intense animosity. The ugly "forest-man" would come to Khukhw's hut every midnight, and inquire: "Dchit'anàà Khukhw,[1] art thou at home?" "Yes, I am. If thou art not an old woman come and fight me," responded the fearless Abkhaz. The "forest-man", however, would never agree to a single combat. Khukhw, tired at last of these childish pranks, resorted to a ruse. Placing a log in his bed, he went outside and hid behind a bush not far from the hut. At midnight the "forest-man" came as usual, and receiving no reply, he concluded that Khukhw was soundly asleep. Entering the hut and seeing, as he thought, the sleeping form of his enemy, he was about to aim a blow at the log, when the Abkhaz, who had crept in unawares, fired a shot at him. The "forest-man", although mortally wounded, managed to crawl away, and on the following morning Khukhw followed up the blood-stained footprints, and finding the dead body of his enemy, buried him with due honours. Khukhw appropriated the wealth of the last "forest-man", and also married his beautiful wife. . . .

5. *Atswaqwa*, the rainbow

The god of the rainbow is very vindictive; he soars high in the 776 824
clouds and punishes, either by death or the infliction of disease, all

[1] A peculiarity of the Abkhasian: the surname precedes the Christian name.

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who transgress against him. In order to avoid incurring the anger of this god, an Abkhaz will not draw water or wash himself when the rainbow is in the sky, and is generally careful about the use of water. Like any other god, *Àtswaqwa* may bestow the " warmth of his eyes and his heart ", in return for offerings and prayers. Whoever is affected by his wrath, grows icteritious, emaciated, to save his life he must, at the direction of the sorceresses, make the following offering to the rainbow god :—

On one of the Thursdays [1] the old (" pure ") women take the sick person to the river, pass (Geo. *shemoavleben*) around his head 4–5 yards of variegated chintz, and pray : " The great god ! Acknowledging his transgressions this sick person (the name is mentioned) has appeared before thee, and humbly entreats thee to accept this chintz as a pledge that he will perform the established offering at the proper time, at the direction of the sorceresses ! "

On the following Thursday he is taken again to the same river and place. Usually three women say the prayer, but there may be seven. Men, with the exception of the patient, are not allowed to be present at this ceremony. The sick person is dressed entirely in white. The eldest woman [2] kills a capon and a hen ; women carry out all the duties, preparing *ashwamkydt'*, " *ghomi* " (millet pudding), *akwakwàr*, and *atcha-gvazàl* (Geo. *ghvezeli*, an oblong bread), of each of which there must be seven of the usual, and seven of the very small size. All these are placed on *ashwamkydt'*, on which also burn seven wax candles. The prayer is said by the eldest woman. The patient kneels in front of the offering ; he is taken home immediately the ceremony is over, and he must not look back. The seven small *akwakwàr*, *atcha-gvazàl*, and seven small portions of *ghomi* (*abòst'a*—millet porridge), are thrown into the water ; they represent the share of the female slaves (*aM'op'hwòs*) of the rainbow god. Everything else is consumed by the women themselves ; the remains being thrown into the river, for nothing must be taken home.

Muhammadans must also burn candles at this offering. The candles are fixed on a kind of hoop made of grape vine. At the end of the ceremony the hoop with the burning candles is thrown into the river.

It should be noted that in some parts of the country this god is called *Àtswaqwa-òlia* (the Rainbow-Eliah). So at least he was called, according to the testimony of D. I. Gulia, by Javaz, the famous woman supplicant.

[1] Thursday in Megrelian is *tsashkhe*, the day of the sky. It is noteworthy that the Abkhasians perform usually on the day of the sky, the majority of rites that are seemingly connected with the sky, as in the case given.

[2] The Abkhasian women kill animals only on occasions of certain offerings.

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6. *Akhyə Zoshən*

The Abkhasians ascribe diseases generally to supernatural influences or gods, but some diseases have their own special gods. The god of small-pox, for example, is *Akhyə Zoshən* (the golden Zoskhan), and also his consort, the goddess *Khanıa Shkwəkwa* (Khania the white). How important are the gods of the Abkhasians may be judged from the following circumstance which took place during the spring of 1914 in one of the settlements of the village Jgerdi. Throughout the winter and spring of the year Abkhasia was in the grip of a severe epidemic of small-pox. In order to check the spread of the disease vaccinators were sent to the affected areas. The following account of what happened was described to me by P. Janashia, one of the vaccinators. A certain settlement, fearing that the gods might wreak vengeance upon them, refused to admit the vaccinators; they preferred to safeguard themselves against this terrible disease, *atswarp'shdzə* (small-pox), by the adoption of the gods. *Atswə* denotes skin, rind, and *ap'shdzə*, pretty, beautiful; the whole, in translation, denoting "that which decorates (beautifies) the skin".

By pooling their resources, the settlement raised enough money to buy a couple of snow-white goats and a sufficiency of provisions, and made an expedition into the forest. Here, amidst the quietude and peace of over-hanging leaves, a sumptuous feast was prepared for the divine guests. When everything was ready, and the victim had been placed, according to custom, on *ashwamkyadı'*, the head of the settlement said the prayer and made the offering to the gods. Nearby stood two bedsteads, adorned with silk bedclothes, on which sat two young women, an *aznauri* and a peasant woman; their naked breasts were covered with silk handkerchiefs. The whole assembly knelt down, while the head of the settlement implored the gods to accept their offering by kissing the breasts of the most beautiful women of the settlement, and thus become, in accordance with the ancestral custom, adopted sons of the settlement. Near the "foster-mothers of gods" stood two of the finest horses, one with a side saddle. The sumptuous feast followed the ceremony of adoption, and afterwards the people, holding the horses by the bridle, on which were to be riding the newly adopted gods, *Akhyə Zoshən* and *Khanıa Shkwəkwa*, escorted the precious guests to the accompaniment of song, far away from the settlement. Thus they "turned away", or warded off, the small-pox.

"You may not believe it," an Abkhaz from the settlement told me, "but this 'adoption' saved us from the small-pox; not one of us fell a victim to it. You, the learned, have caused our ruin by bringing down upon us the anger of the gods of our fathers," he concluded, with a deep sigh.

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THE ABKHASIAN NAME OF THE SUPREME BEING

By SIMON JANASHIA

[Atranslation of the article published in Georgian in *Dsiidsdeuli*—The Year Book, of the Georgian Philological Society, Tiflis, 1923–4, vol. i–ii, pp. 69–73.]

IT was Uslar who first observed that the Abkhasian name of the Supreme Being was in the plural.[1] He even quotes an example, i.e. *antsw̆d dəuk'wa*,* the great God, lit. (*les*) *dieux grands*, in which the appearance of the adjective in the plural definitely testifies that, in the conception of the speaker, the ancient religious ideas—according to which God was not of one, but of many parts—were still in existence. The author remarks " only heathen Abkhasians say this ", the Chirstian and Muhammadan Abkhasians conceiving God quite definitely as the One, absolute Being.

Such an assertion was, perhaps, an excusable mistake on the part of the distinguished linguist, who was an orthodox Christian. It is impossible to divide the Abkhasians into such groups on the basis of their religious beliefs, despite the fact that formally they belong either to the Christian Church or to Islam. The example quoted by Uslar is probably one of those fortuitous discoveries whereby there suddenly emerges from the routine of ordinary usage a product of the national-spiritual creativeness belonging to the depths of the remote past.

Later, the same opinion (about the plural form) was put forward by Dcharaia [2] and Janashia.[3] The latter, however, thought that the word in question may have originated from the same *an*-root which in Abkhasian denotes the *mother*-notion.

Professor Marr shares only the first part of this view: he writes,[4] " . . . of great interest is the word *an*, god, which, in Abkhasian, appears usually as the plurale tantum *antsw̆d*, God, lit. 'gods'."

In the summer of 1921, while in Abkhasia, in the village Adzvibzha (in Abzhua, the Kodor district), where I was sent by the Tiflis State University on a philological research study, I was able to collect certain data which threw more light on the question, as will be seen.

In the course of my research work, I was able to establish the validity of the formation of the word in question by the discovery

* For the pronunciation of *tsw̆* and *k'w̆*, see p. 118, n. *, and p. 131, n. *. (Translator's note.)

[1] Uslar, P. K., *The Abkhasian Languages* (in Russian). Tiflis, 1887, p. 78.

[2] Dcharaia, P., *On the Relation of the Abkhasian Languages to the Japhetic Languages*, in *Materials for Japhetic Linguistics* (in Russian), St. Petersburg, 1912, vol. iv, pp. 31–3.

[3] Janashia, N., *The Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians*, in *The Christian East* (in Russian), St. Pb., 1915, vol. iv, issue i, pp. 74–8. [See the English translation in this number, pp. 118–9. ED.]

[4] Marr, N., *From a Linguistic Journey to Abkhasia* in *Izvestiya* (Bulletin) of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (in Russian), St. Pb., 1913, vol. vii, No. 6, p. 315.

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of an analogical formation in a *sh*-root- (= creating, to create, whence the verbal noun *ashard*) word *ashatswà*, which represents an epithet of a deity, and is equivalent to Georgian *gamtcheni*, creator.[1] I have not heard this word used apart from its association with the word God. This root is usually used in its past-participle form. A popular Abkhasian expression is *antswà-hazshàz*, Creator God, but the following phrases are also in common use:—*ashatswà irshaz*, by the Creator (lit. creators') created (said of something very pleasing), and *ashatswà irmshaz*, by the Creator (lit., creators') not created (said of something unpleasing). In these examples *ashatswà* is understood to be in the plural, which is unmistakably borne out by the pronominal particle r (*i-r-shaz*, *i-r-mshaz*) which indicates the plurality of the subject (the determinative word in our examples).

It may, however, be argued that the phrases just quoted are composite, and that the particle indicated, a fossilized morphe which has lost its meaning. We will therefore quote another phrase, *nas ashatswà irshàma art'*, "Is it possible that the Creator (lit. creators) created these?" (it was said of the animals), in which *ashatswà* is directly represented as the subject in the plural. This word, and the notion conveyed by it, must have simultaneously undergone the same metamorphosis as the basic name itself, i.e., they must have lost first the intrinsic and then the formal meaning; it became a simple plurale tantum, for instance, in the widely used name for a kind of sacrificial animal, *ashatswà-dzatwə*, the Creator's (lit. creators') sacrificial animal, in which we should have had, in accordance with the rules of the Abkhasian compound word-formation, the form *ashatswà-rdzatwə*. . . .

It is clear that in this case the result of the acute conflict between old and new ideas, and in connection with it, between dead and living forms, is far less definite than in the case of *antswà* itself. The changes to which the latter has been subjected have been more rapid; but nevertheless, owing to language inertia, we find facts which reveal the original meaning of the process of word-formation. One such fact, quoted by Uslar, is given above. Of no less interest, in my opinion, is an example I found: the heroine of a story which I noted down, bears the following name, *antswà rt'əp'hà khànkwla*, that is "God (‖ gods)-their-daughter-Khakula" in other words, the god's daughter Khàkûla (Khàkûla being a girl's name). The same pronominal particle *r* (*r-t'əp'hà*) explicitly indicates here that for the remote ancestors of the speaker, God represented the union of numerous forces.[2]

[1] In Megrelian, *odabadi*. See Janashia, *The Abkhasian Cult and Mode of Life* (in Russian) in *The Christian East*, St. Pb., 1916, vol. v, issue 3, p. 168. Also Marr, *On the Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians* (in Russian) in *The Christian East*, vol. iv, issue 1, p. 132.

[2] See also Dcharaia, op. cit., p. 32.

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Finally, it has already been noted[1] that this peculiar religious conception—in accordance with which, not only the supreme beings of the national pantheon, but even the elements (personified, of course), are forces of many parts, each one endowed with its own particular aspect, with its separate parts, must have been common to all the Georgian tribes proper. Thus, for instance, in the Summer of 1921, I heard, in the village Eredvi (in the district of Gori) the following expression:—*mashin gagvidsqra tchveni dsili ghmert'i*, "Then our part of god was angry with us"; and this year, in Tiflis, I overheard in the street:—*bnelashi ver vitsani, ai, ase venatsvale tchem dsil ghmert's*, "I did not recognize (him or it) in the dark, I swear by my part of God."

[1] Janashia, *The Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians*, p. 75. [English translation, p. 119. ED.] Expressions such as "my part of God", "my part of the Icon", are quite common among the Abkhasians. Of interest, in this connection, is the curse *dmtsa-khu tqmat*, "may thy part of fire burn out." According to Mr. Marghania (Maan), the Shepherds in Abzhua, when grazing their sheep in the mountains, pray to the Marshania-s' part of God (*Marshyánas rmtsqubkhe*, because the guardian-god of these mountains is supposed to be the god (or part of god) of the Marshania *gvari*.